The Relationship Between Political Volunteers of the Dozer Team and Voters in Shaping Political Participation in the 2024 South Sulawesi Regional Elections

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze how relationships between non-party political volunteers and voters shape political participation in the 2024 South Sulawesi local election. The research employs a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design, utilizing in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation as data collection methods. The subjects of the study include Dozer political volunteers and voters in Makassar City, Gowa Regency, and Maros Regency. Data were analyzed using layered thematic analysis. The findings reveal that voter participation is formed through multilayered social relationships consisting of interpersonal, emotional, and instrumental relations. Interpersonal relations build trust and social legitimacy, emotional relations strengthen political attachment and loyalty, while instrumental relations translate these attachments into concrete electoral actions. This study highlights that local political participation should be understood as a socially embedded practice and underscores the strategic role of non-party political volunteers in local political mobilization.

Keywords: Non-party political volunteers; political participation; social relations; local elections; local democracy.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana relasi antara relawan politik non-partai dan pemilih membentuk partisipasi politik pada Pilkada Sulawesi Selatan 2024. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus intrinsik, dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi. Subjek penelitian adalah relawan politik Dozer dan pemilih di Kota Makassar, Kabupaten Gowa, dan Kabupaten Maros. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan analisis tematik berlapis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa partisipasi politik pemilih terbentuk melalui mekanisme relasi sosial berlapis yang meliputi relasi interpersonal, emosional, dan instrumental. Relasi interpersonal membangun kepercayaan dan legitimasi sosial, relasi emosional memperdalam keterikatan dan loyalitas politik, sementara relasi instrumental menerjemahkan keterikatan tersebut ke dalam tindakan elektoral konkret. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa partisipasi politik lokal merupakan praktik sosial yang tertanam dalam jaringan relasi komunitas, serta menunjukkan peran strategis relawan politik non-partai dalam mobilisasi politik lokal.

Kata kunci: Relawan politik non-partai; partisipasi politik; relasi sosial; Pilkada; demokrasi lokal.

A. Introduction

Political participation serves as a primary indicator of local democratic quality, as it reflects the level of citizen involvement in public decision-making processes and the legitimacy of governments produced through electoral mechanisms (Dahl, 1989, p. 221; Verba et al., 1995, p. 38). In contemporary democratic studies, political participation is no longer understood merely as rational individual actions but as social practices influenced by local contexts, social networks, and interpersonal relations at the community komunitas (Dalton, 2017, p. 72; Norris, 2011, p. 145; Putnam, 2000, p. 288).

Although Indonesia's electoral design provides ample space for participation through direct regional head elections (Pilkada), field practices reveal a gap between formal electoral designs and actual community political participation dynamics. Several studies indicate that voter turnout in Pilkada is not solely determined by electoral rules and procedures but is heavily influenced by social mobilization mechanisms operating outside formal political institutions (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019, p. 107; Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2016, p. 8; Muhtadi, 2019, p. 6).

One key factor explaining this gap is the limited reach of political parties at the polling station (TPS) level. Literature on party institutionalization shows that political parties tend to operate in an elitist, centralized manner, distanced from voters' daily social lives (Katz & Mair, 2018, p. 141; Mietzner, 2020, p. 1028). Consequently, direct relations between parties and voters at the micro-level become weak, leading to suboptimal political participation mobilization processes.

In this context, non-party political volunteers emerge as alternative actors filling the voids that political parties cannot reach. Political volunteers operate through social proximity, trust, and personal relations with voters, thus holding significant potential in shaping local political participation (Della Porta, 2018, p. 25; Scarrow, 2015, p. 145; P. F. Whiteley & Seyd, 2015, p. 62).This phenomenon becomes increasingly relevant in the context of the 2024 South Sulawesi Pilkada, characterized by regional social diversity and variations in voter participation rates across areas (KPU Provinsi Sulawesi Selatan, 2024).

Dozer Volunteers represent a form of non-party political volunteers that developed in the context of the 2024 South Sulawesi Pilkada and operate outside formal political party structures. As non-party volunteers, Dozer is not institutionally bound to any specific political party but functions as a social network actively reaching voters at the community level. This

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phenomenon aligns with international study findings showing the increasing role of non-party volunteers in contemporary electoral democracies (Klandermans, 2014, p. 10; P. F. Whiteley & Seyd, 2015, p. 112).

Empirically, Dozer Volunteers have a massive and organized membership base, with distribution spanning urban, peri-urban, and transitional rural-urban areas in South Sulawesi. This volunteer organization's pattern demonstrates mobilization characteristics based on local social networks rather than formal hierarchical structures like political parties (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2016, p. 15; Mietzner, 2020, p. 1030). This condition enables Dozer Volunteers to establish closer and more sustainable relations with voters.

The primary strategy employed by Dozer Volunteers is building direct relations with voters through interpersonal interactions, emotional proximity, and practical assistance in electoral processes. This approach positions volunteers as actors present in voters' social lives, not merely as campaign message deliverers (Della Porta, 2018, p. 117; Putnam, 2000, p. 23). Thus, Dozer Volunteers not only serve as electoral mobilization tools but also as social connectors mediating relations between candidates and voters.

Studies on political participation in electoral democracies have been dominated by approaches focusing on political parties, candidates, and formal electoral institutions. Many researches position voting behavior as the result of rational evaluations of programs, performance, or candidate identities (Achen & Bartels, 2016, p. 17; Dalton, 2017, p. 45). Such approaches tend to overlook the relational dimensions operating at the micro-level.

Research on political volunteers in Indonesia is generally descriptive and positions volunteers as complementary phenomena in electoral contestations (Budianto, 2024, p. 52; Pratama Putra et al., 2022, p. 1390). Studies specifically analyzing micro-relations between volunteers and voters as mechanisms for shaping political participation remain very limited, especially those using qualitative approaches based on social interactions.

Additionally, qualitative studies exploring interpersonal, emotional, and instrumental relational dynamics between volunteers and voters in the context of Pilkada in Eastern Indonesia are rarely found. This limitation results in an incomplete understanding of how local political participation is formed through non-party social networks (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019, p. 12; Muhtadi, 2019, p. 208). Therefore, this research is positioned to fill this gap by offering an in-depth analysis of the relations between political volunteers and voters in the context of the 2024 South Sulawesi Pilkada.

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Based on the background and research gaps outlined, the objective of this research is to analyzethe relations between Dozer Team political volunteers and voters in shaping political participation in the 2024 South Sulawesi Pilkada. This research specifically focuses on social relations built between volunteers and voters at the community level. The research question posed is: How do the relations between Dozer Team political volunteers and voters shape political participation in the 2024 South Sulawesi Pilkada?

Based on the background description, empirical phenomena, and research gaps presented, it can be concluded that political participation in local democratic contexts cannot be adequately explained solely through institutional and formal electoral approaches. The limited reach of political parties at the micro-level and the strengthening role of non-party political volunteers indicate that social relations between political actors and voters become key mechanisms in forming local political participation. Therefore, to comprehensively understand how relations between Dozer political volunteers and voters shape political participation in the 2024 South Sulawesi Pilkada, a theoretical framework is needed that can explain political participation as social practice, the role of political volunteers in electoral democracies, and social relations as political mobilization mechanisms. This theoretical foundation will be discussed systematically in the next section through literature review and conceptual framework formulation.

Literature Review

Political Participation in Local Perspective

Classically, political participation is defined as citizen activities aimed at influencing political decision-making processes, including leader selection and public policies (Dahl, 1989, p. 221; Verba et al., 1995, p. 38). In local democratic contexts, political participation is not only reflected through voter turnout at polling stations but also through citizen involvement in political discussions, campaign activities, and social interactions with political implications (Dalton, 2017, p. 72; Norris, 2011, p. 145).

Rational approaches viewing political participation as the result of individual cost-benefit calculations are deemed inadequate for explaining participation dynamics at the local level, especially in societies with strong social bonds. Several studies affirm that participation at the community level is better understood as social practices embedded in daily relations, shared norms, and trust among individuals (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248; Coleman, 1990, p. 300;

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Putnam, 2000, p. 288). In this perspective, political participation becomes a product of social networks enabling information exchange, preference formation, and collective mobilization.

In the context of Pilkada in Indonesia, local political participation is often shaped by informal mechanisms operating through social proximity and personal relations, not merely formal campaigns or candidate policy programs (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019, p. 107; Muhtadi, 2019, p. 6). Therefore, understanding political participation as social practice is essential for explaining variations in voter participation across regions and the role of non-party actors in local democracies.

Political Volunteers in Electoral Democracies

Political volunteers are non-party actors voluntarily involved in political activities to support specific candidates or agendas without formal ties to political party structures. In contemporary electoral democracies, non-party political volunteers are increasingly prominent as responses to weakened party representational functions and rising political personalization (Scarrow, 2015, p. 145; P. F. Whiteley & Seyd, 2015, p. 62).

International studies show that political volunteers serve as mediators bridging political elites and voters through interpersonal and emotional approaches (Klandermans, 2014, p. 10; P. Whiteley, 2019, p. 62). In Indonesia, political volunteers often function as social brokers utilizing community networks, cultural proximity, and local trust to mobilize political support (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2016, p. 15; Mietzner, 2020, p. 1030).

The role of volunteers as social brokers is significant because they not only convey political messages but also frame them according to voters' social contexts. Through informal and flexible relations, political volunteers can fill spaces unreachable by political parties, especially at micro-levels like RT, RW, and TPS (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019, p. 107). Thus, non-party political volunteers can be understood as key actors in electoral democracies operating through relational logic, not merely institutional.

Social Relations as Mobilization Mechanisms

Social relations are central elements in local political participation mobilization processes. In social capital theory perspective, interpersonal relations characterized by trust and reciprocal norms enable coordination and collective actions, including political activities (Putnam, 2000, p. 288). These social relations become primary mediums for transforming social resources into actual political participation.

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This research distinguishes social relations into three main forms. First, interpersonal relations, namely direct connections built through routine interactions and social proximity between volunteers and voters. These relations form trust and legitimacy of volunteers as political message conveyers (Klandermans, 2014, p. 19; Putnam, 2000, p. 23). Second, emotional relations, encompassing empathy, sense of belonging, and psychological bonds between volunteers and voters. Emotional relations play crucial roles in building political loyalty and collective identification (Dalton, 2017, p. 72; Della Porta, 2018, p. 117). Third, instrumental relations, oriented towards practical functions such as providing technical Pilkada information, encouragement to TPS, and voter assistance. These relations serve as concrete mobilization mechanisms for participation (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019, p. 107; Muhtadi, 2019, p. 6).

These three forms of relations do not stand alone but intertwine in shaping local political participation. Interpersonal relations create trust foundations, emotional relations strengthen political bonds, and instrumental relations translate those bonds into tangible political actions.

Research Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review above, this research develops a conceptual framework positioning non-party political volunteers as intermediary actors connecting social capital with voter political participation. This framework views political participation as the result of relational processes occurring through social interactions between volunteers and voters at the community level

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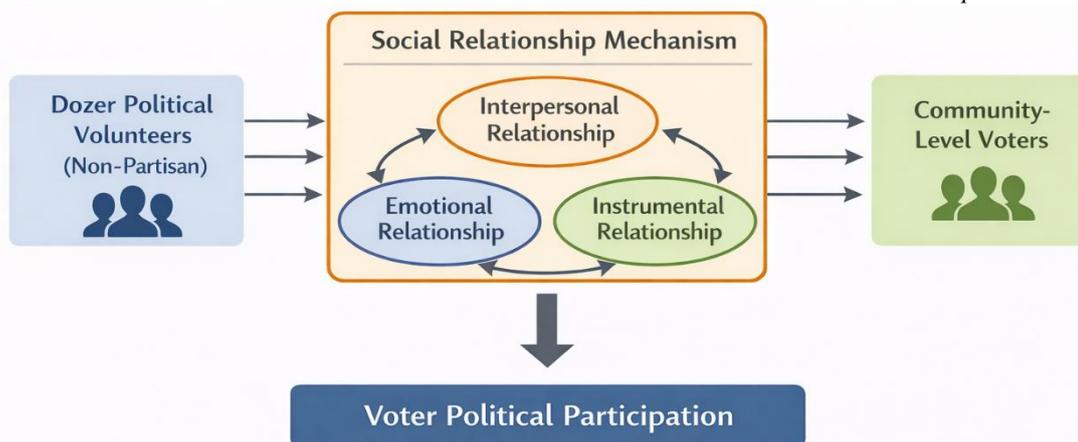spektrumfisip@unwahas ac.id

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Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Volunteer-Voter Relations in Forming Political Participation

In this conceptual framework, interpersonal, emotional, and instrumental relations are positioned as transformation mechanisms linking the presence of political volunteers with voter political participation. This framework also serves as an analytical basis for research method design and empirical findings analysis in the subsequent sections.

B. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach to examine the social relational dynamics between political volunteers and voters in shaping local political participation. A qualitative design is appropriate because it enables an in-depth understanding of meanings, interactions, and relational processes embedded in everyday social life that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45; Putnam, 2000, p. 288). The study adopts an intrinsic case study design, focusing on the 2024 South Sulawesi Regional Election as a case characterized by strong non-party political volunteer mobilization operating through community-based social networks. This design allows for a context-sensitive analysis of volunteer–voter relations within a specific spatial and temporal setting (Yin, 2018, p. 48).

The research was conducted in Makassar City, Gowa Regency, and Maros Regency in South Sulawesi Province. These locations were purposively selected to represent variations in social characteristics, ranging from urban to peri-urban and urban–rural transitional areas, which influence different patterns of political mobilization and voter participation (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019, p. 12).

The primary research subjects are Dozer political volunteers, a non-party volunteer network actively involved in voter mobilization during the 2024 Pilkada. Voters are positioned as relational actors who interact directly with volunteers in community contexts.

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Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance, experience, and capacity to provide rich information regarding volunteer–voter relations. A total of nine key informants were involved, representing strategic, operational, and technical levels within the volunteer organization. The number of informants was determined by information depth and role variation rather than population size, consistent with qualitative case study principles (Yin, 2018, p. 48).

Informant selection was guided by the following criteria: holding an official structural position within the Dozer political volunteer organization; being directly involved in volunteer recruitment, field coordination, or voter mobilization activities; having firsthand experience in political mobilization during the 2024 South Sulawesi Pilkada; possessing strategic or operational knowledge regarding volunteer–voter interactions at the community level; and being willing to participate in in-depth interviews and provide reflective, experience-based accounts (Klandermans, 2014, p. 10).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted to explore informants' experiences, mobilization strategies, and relational practices with voters. Participatory observation was used to capture volunteer–voter interactions and internal coordination processes in community settings, while document analysis supported data triangulation and contextual validation (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45).

Data analysis followed an iterative thematic analysis process. Initial open coding was conducted to identify key themes emerging from interview and observation data. These themes were then organized through axial coding to establish relationships among interpersonal, emotional, and instrumental relational dimensions. Finally, selective coding was applied to synthesize core relational mechanisms explaining the formation of voter political participation (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). Data collection and analysis were carried out concurrently and continued until thematic saturation was achieved.

C. Discussion and Findings

Interpersonal Relations of Dozer Volunteers and Voters

Research results indicate that interpersonal relations constitute the earliest and most determining foundation in forming voter political participation in the 2024 South Sulawesi

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Pilkada. These relations are built through social proximity between Dozer Volunteers and voters originating from the same social environments, such as neighborhood relations, kinship, and involvement in recurring community activities. This proximity creates situations where political communication occurs naturally and inseparably from daily social interactions. In this context, political messages do not appear as formal instructions but as parts of established social conversations.

Field findings show that volunteers utilize existing social relations to gradually open political communication spaces. This approach makes voters feel not targeted by campaigns but engaged in personal dialogues. One informant explained that political communication is conducted through long-standing interactions in social lives. "*We don't come with attributes or talk directly about politics. Because we've interacted often, the conversation flows naturally,*" (Volunteer Informant, interview). This quote demonstrates that social proximity functions as a normalization mechanism for political communication, allowing messages to be accepted without resistance.

The second dimension of interpersonal relations is trust, formed through long-term social relations and volunteers' personal reputations in communities. Voters tend to trust political messages delivered by individuals known for their integrity and consistency in daily social lives. This trust acts as an information filtering mechanism, where messages from volunteers are perceived as more credible than those from formal political actors lacking personal proximity. One informant stated that voter acceptance heavily depends on the message deliverer. "*If the speaker is someone known for a long time, voters usually trust more and don't ask many questions,*" (Volunteer Informant, interview).

This trust not only influences voter attitudes toward political messages but also encourages initial participation, particularly in readiness to attend polling stations. This finding reinforces the view that trust-based social capital plays a crucial role in facilitating local political participation, especially in contexts where social relations remain primary references in political decision-making (Klandermans, 2014, p. 10; Putnam, 2000, p. 288).

Besides proximity and trust, interpersonal relations generate legitimacy for volunteers as local political actors. Dozer Volunteers are perceived as community parts, not extensions of political elites or parties. This social legitimacy provides volunteers with strategic positions as connectors between candidates and voters, while reducing resistance to delivered political messages. One informant described that voters more readily accept political invitations

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because volunteers are considered "one of us." "*We are from this environment, so our invitations are seen as normal and not forced*," (Volunteer Informant, interview).

Volunteer legitimacy becomes highly important in contexts of limited relational reach by political parties at micro-levels. When parties are not directly present in voters' social lives, volunteers with social legitimacy can fill those spaces and execute mobilization functions more effectively. This finding aligns with studies positioning non-party political volunteers as intermediary actors operating through relational logic, not merely institutional (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019, p. 107; P. F. Whiteley & Seyd, 2015, p. 62).

Overall, interpersonal relations can be understood as structural prerequisites for local political participation formation. These relations open communication access, build trust, and create social legitimacy enabling volunteers to perform mobilization roles effectively. Without strong interpersonal relation foundations, political mobilization efforts tend to be superficial and less sustainable.

Table 1. Interpersonal Relations of Dozer Volunteers and Their Impact on Political Participation

Relational Dimension	Form of Relational Practice	Social Working Mechanism	Impact on Political Participation
Social Proximity	Routine interactions in community life (neighborhood, kinship, social activities)	Normalization of political communication through daily relations	Political messages accepted without resistance
Trust	Long-term social relations and volunteer's personal reputation	Message credibility and reduction of voter suspicion	Emergence of readiness to participate
Volunteer Legitimacy	Volunteers perceived as part of the community	Social recognition of volunteer's role as connector	Initial voter participation at TPS

Source: Research informant interview data (2025); processed by researcher.

Although interpersonal relations prove to be initial foundations in political participation formation, research findings show that these relations primarily play roles in opening access, building trust, and encouraging initial participation. The sustainability and depth of voter political support require more affective relational dimensions. Therefore, the next section discusses how emotional relations between Dozer Volunteers and voters form senses of belonging and electoral loyalty in the 2024 South Sulawesi Pilkada context.

Emotional Relations and Political Identification

If interpersonal relations function as initial foundations for political participation formation, research results show that emotional relations serve as strengthening mechanisms deepening voter political attachments. Emotional relations emerge when interactions between

Dozer Volunteers and voters are not only based on social proximity and trust but also on empathy, personal attention, and understanding of voters' social conditions. In this context, volunteers do not merely convey political messages but present as individuals showing concern for voters' daily issues.

Field findings reveal that volunteer empathy is often expressed through non-political conversations touching personal and social voter aspects, such as family economic conditions, environmental issues, or community needs. This empathy builds affective bonds making voters feel cared for and valued. One informant explained that emotional approaches are more effective than direct political invitations. "*If we've cared about their conditions, political discussions become easier to accept*," (Volunteer Informant, interview). This quote shows that empathy functions as an affective bridge connecting social relations with political involvement.

Emotional relations subsequently develop into senses of belonging and political identification. Voters begin viewing volunteers and their networks as parts of the same social groups. This identification forms collective "us" narratives, where political support is no longer perceived as mere individual choices but as parts of community solidarity. In such conditions, voter political decisions are influenced by desires to remain parts of meaningful social groups. This finding aligns with views that emotions and collective identities play important roles in political participation formation, especially at local levels (Dalton, 2017, p. 72; Della Porta, 2018, p. 117).

Political identification formed through emotional relations directly impacts electoral loyalty. Voters with emotional bonds to volunteers tend to show consistent support, not only in attending TPS but also in maintaining their political choices. One informant conveyed that voters feeling "one group" are harder to influence by other parties' political messages. "*If they already feel one with us, they usually stick with their choices*," (Volunteer Informant, interview).

Thus, emotional relations can be understood as mechanisms transforming initial participation triggered by interpersonal relations into more stable and sustainable political support. These relations do not replace interpersonal ones but complement them with affective dimensions deepening voter political attachments. Without emotional relations, political participation tends to be temporary and changeable; conversely, with strong emotional relations, participation develops into electoral loyalty relatively resistant to short-term campaign dynamics.

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Table 2. Emotional Relations of Dozer Volunteers in Forming Political Participation

Emotional Relation Element	Relational Practices in the Field	Formed Affective Mechanisms	Impact on Political Participation
Empathy	Personal concern for voters' social conditions and needs	Formation of emotional bonds and sense of being cared for	Initial voter political attachment
Sense of Belonging	Repeated interactions emphasizing shared experiences and interests	Strengthening of affection and psychological closeness	Consistency of political support
Political Identification	Construction of collective "us" narrative in the community	Internalization of group identity	Voter electoral loyalty

Source: Research informant interview data (2025); processed by researcher.

This finding shows that emotional relations play crucial roles in deepening and stabilizing voter political support through empathy and collective identification. However, such emotional attachments still need translation into concrete political actions. Therefore, the next section discusses how instrumental relations between Dozer Volunteers and voters function as practical mechanisms transforming social and emotional attachments into actual voter presence in electoral processes.

Instrumental Relations and Participation Mobilization

Research results indicate that instrumental relations constitute the determining final stage in voter political participation formation processes, as they translate interpersonal and emotional relations into concrete electoral actions. These relations are practical and operational, focusing on reducing technical barriers and direct facilitation to ensure voter political intentions culminate in polling station attendance. Thus, instrumental relations do not stand alone but work effectively because supported by previously formed trust and emotional attachments.

The primary form of instrumental relations found is the delivery of technical Pilkada information. Dozer Volunteers actively explain voting schedules, TPS locations, and ballot marking procedures through informal direct communications. This technical information is crucial as some voters experience administrative confusion potentially hindering participation. One informant stated, "*Many residents actually want to vote but hesitate because they don't understand the technicalities. If explained directly, they become more confident*," (Volunteer Informant, interview). This finding affirms that instrumental relations function as administrative barrier reduction mechanisms, increasing voter readiness to participate (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019, p. 107; Muhtadi, 2019, p. 6).

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Besides information provision, instrumental relations are manifested through direct encouragement to TPS. This encouragement is given to voters previously having social proximity and emotional attachments with volunteers. It serves as social reminders approaching voting days and functions to activate intentions into actual actions. One informant explained, "*They actually intend to, we just remind them not to forget to come to TPS*," (Volunteer Informant, interview). This shows that instrumental relations function as final triggers in mobilization processes.

Instrumental relations also include voter assistance, especially for elderly voters or those unfamiliar with voting procedures. This assistance is perceived as social support forms helping voters exercise their political rights more safely and comfortably. One informant recounted, "*Some voters need accompaniment because they're old or don't understand the flow. We help so they can vote calmly*," (Volunteer Informant, interview). This assistance demonstrates that instrumental relations not only aim to increase participation numbers but also encourage inclusive participation.

Overall, instrumental relations can be understood as final conversion mechanisms ensuring interpersonal and emotional relations truly produce actual political participation. Without instrumental relations, social and emotional attachments potentially stop at attitude and intention levels. Conversely, when instrumental relations are executed contextually, ethically, and trust-based, local political mobilization proceeds more effectively, socially accepted, and sustainable.

Table 3. Instrumental Relations of Dozer Volunteers and Political Participation Mobilization

Instrumental Relation Dimension	Volunteer Operational Practices	Practical Working Mechanisms	Impact on Political Participation
Technical Pilkada Information	Direct socialization of schedule, TPS, and ballot marking procedures	Reduction of administrative barriers and increased voter readiness	Voters understand the process and are ready to participate
Encouragement to TPS	Personal reminders approaching voting day	Activation of intention into concrete action	Voter attendance at TPS
Voter Assistance	Assistance for elderly voters and voters less familiar with procedures	Social and practical support	Inclusive and sustainable participation

Source: Research informant interview data (2025); processed by researcher.

Thus, this finding affirms that instrumental relations are key components perfecting political participation mobilization processes through translating social and emotional attachments into actual electoral actions. Together with interpersonal and emotional relations, instrumental relations form layered and complementary local political mobilization

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mechanisms. This finding becomes an important analytical basis for further discussion in the next section, to position research empirical results within local political participation theoretical frameworks and non-party political volunteer roles.

Social Relations as Political Mobilization Mechanisms

Research findings show that voter political participation in the 2024 South Sulawesi Pilkada is formed through layered social relation mechanisms, encompassing interpersonal, emotional, and instrumental relations. This pattern strengthens the view that local political mobilization cannot be adequately explained through formal electoral or rational-institutional approaches alone but must be understood as social processes embedded in communities' daily relation networks (Klandermans, 2014, p. 10; Putnam, 2000, p. 288).

Interpersonal relations function as initial foundations opening communication access and building trust between volunteers and voters. Emotional relations then deepen political attachments through empathy, senses of belonging, and collective identification, while instrumental relations translate those attachments into concrete electoral actions. This finding indicates that local political mobilization is a gradual process moving from social to electoral realms, not an instant process solely dependent on formal campaigns or institutional rules.

Thus, local political participation can be understood as social practices embedded in community social relations. Voter decisions to participate are not merely results of rational evaluations of candidates or programs but outcomes of ongoing and meaningful social interactions in daily lives.

Dozer Volunteers as Non-Party Intermediary Actors

Further discussion shows that Dozer Volunteers function as intermediary actors bridging distances between candidates and voters. In contexts of limited relational reach by political parties at micro-levels, non-party volunteers play strategic roles as social connectors operating through personal proximity and community legitimacy (Scarrow, 2015, p. 145; P. F. Whiteley & Seyd, 2015, p. 62).

Unlike political parties operating through formal structures and one-way communications, Dozer Volunteers operate through flexible and contextual relational logic. They not only convey political messages but also frame them according to voters' social experiences and needs. This explains why political messages delivered by volunteers are more readily accepted and internalized compared to formal messages from socially distant political institutions.

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In this perspective, Dozer Volunteers cannot be understood merely as candidate campaign tools but as non-party political actors executing social representation functions at community levels. This finding expands understandings of political volunteers in Indonesia's electoral democracies, which have tended to be viewed as additional phenomena in political contestations.

Comparison with Previous Research

Compared to previous research, this study's findings align with studies emphasizing the importance of social networks, trust, and interpersonal relations in forming local political participation (Klandermans, 2014, p. 10; Muhtadi, 2019, p. 6; Putnam, 2000, p. 288). However, this research provides additional contributions by showing how those social relations work integratively and layered in non-party political volunteer contexts.

Unlike some studies positioning political volunteers as transactional electoral brokers, this research's findings show that mobilization by Dozer Volunteers is not solely driven by material incentives. Instead, mobilization occurs through combinations of interpersonal, emotional, and instrumental relations rooted in community social lives. Thus, this research enriches political mobilization literature by emphasizing relational and affective dimensions often marginalized in formal electoral studies.

Additionally, this research expands empirical contexts of political volunteer studies by placing them in Eastern Indonesia, which has received relatively less attention in national literature. This provides more diverse contextual perspectives in understanding local political participation dynamics in Indonesia.

Contributions to Local Political Participation Studies

Theoretically, this research contributes to local political participation study development by affirming that political participation is the result of layered relational processes, not merely individual rational decisions. This finding strengthens approaches viewing political participation as social practices influenced by interpersonal, emotional, and instrumental relations.

Empirically, this research demonstrates that non-party political volunteers can play strategic roles in strengthening local political participation, especially in contexts of limited party roles at grassroots levels. By integrating field findings and theoretical frameworks, this

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research offers analytical models usable for understanding political volunteer phenomena in local democratic contexts in Indonesia and other regions with similar social characteristics.

D. Conclusion

This research finds that political participation is formed through layered social relation mechanisms between volunteers and voters, enabling political communication that is socially accepted, emotionally strengthened, and manifested in actual electoral actions; first, interpersonal relations function as the initial foundation for forming political participation, where social proximity, trust, and volunteer legitimacy enable political messages to be accepted without resistance and encourage initial voter participation; second, emotional relations deepen political attachments through empathy, a sense of belonging, and collective identification, transforming initial participation into more stable and sustainable political support in the form of electoral loyalty; third, instrumental relations serve as the final conversion mechanism that translates social and emotional attachments into concrete actions, such as voter attendance at polling stations (TPS), with the provision of technical information, direct encouragement, and voter assistance ensuring that political intentions truly manifest as actual participation; these three relation patterns do not operate separately but complement each other in forming effective, contextual, and socially accepted local political mobilization processes; based on the research findings, it is recommended that future studies on local political participation pay greater attention to the role of non-party political volunteers as relational actors, rather than merely as electoral campaign instruments, with subsequent research expanding regional contexts, types of elections, or comparing volunteer relation patterns across various areas to enrich understanding of community-based political mobilization dynamics, and additionally examining the long-term implications of political volunteers' presence on the quality of local democracy and post-election power relations.

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