



The Existence of Single Candidates in the 2024 Regional Elections in Maros Regency

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

Received: February 25, 2025
Revised: August 20, 2025
Available online: September 10, 2025

KEYWORDS

Existence, Single Candidates, Regional Elections, Empty Box

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A B S T R A C T

The purpose of this study is to analyze the existence of a Single Candidate in the 2024 Regional Head Election in Maros Regency. This study uses a qualitative method with a deductive approach. The research technique is the observation method, namely conducting reflexivity and triangulation and conducting interviews with several agencies such as the Election Supervisory Agency, academics, youth leaders, community organizations and the general public. As well as other sources, namely documents from existing regulations, internet documents and trusted journals. The research was conducted in August - October 2024. The results of the study show that the regional elections will be followed by a Single candidate who is the incumbent, namely the Regent candidate. Initially paired with his partner in the previous period, but because he did not meet the requirements (TMS), there must be a process of replacing the partner in the registration stage. The existence of a Single candidate in the regional elections is also influenced by several things, namely, first, the strength of the Maros Regent candidate who is the incumbent and has social capital and symbolic capital and the strength of support from political parties which is fully held by the Single candidate pair, namely Chaidir Syam-Muetazim. So the pair must advance in the regional head elections against an empty box.

INTRODUCTION

Elections in Indonesia are the only means created so that the Indonesian people can actively participate in democracy. General elections or what are often called democratic rapids. The democratic party in Indonesia is the existence of general election activities that are carried out comprehensively and followed by all Indonesian people who meet the requirements. The general elections are presidential elections, legislative elections and regional head elections both at the provincial and district/city levels.

General elections are divided into two general categories, namely Executive General Elections and Legislative General Elections. Executive General Elections are divided into two, namely Presidential General Elections (Pilpres) and Regional Head Elections (Pilkada). Regional Head Elections are at the Provincial Level and at the Regency/City Level as well as Village Head Elections (Pilkades). While the Legislative Elections (Pileg) or Elections of Council Members are the DPR/DPD Member Legislative Elections at the Central level and the Provincial DPRD and Regency/City DPRD Legislative Elections at the Regional level.

Regional Head Elections have a long history, since Indonesia's independence until before 2004, Regional Head Elections were not participated/elected directly by the people in the regions. However, starting in 2004 after the enactment of Law Number 32 of 2004 concerning regional government, since then regional heads and deputy regional heads have been elected directly by the people in the regions. Although in its history in 2014 Law Number 22 of 2014 was issued which gave authority back to the DPRD to elect regional heads and their deputies. However, because the law resulted in a lot of criticism and rejection, the law was revoked. Previously, Regional Head Elections were held when the regional head's term of office had

ended, then the region could hold special elections in its own region. The election of governors, regents and mayors was held when the term of office had ended and the proposed candidates could come from political parties or individuals. However, in 2024, for the first time, regional elections were held simultaneously throughout Indonesia in November, both at the provincial, district and city levels. There will be 34 provinces and 514 districts/cities that will hold this simultaneous regional election. In the regional election, there will be regions that only have a single candidate. A total of 41 (forty-one) regions that will compete against the empty box in the 2024 regional election are 1 (one) province, 35 (thirty-five) districts and 5 (five) cities.

One of the districts that will hold the regional head election is Maros Regency. Maros Regency is a district located in South Sulawesi Province, directly adjacent to Makassar City and Pangkep Regency and Watampone Regency. Interestingly, in the regional head election of Maros Regency, there is only 1 (one) candidate pair or called a Single candidate who will participate in the regional head election so that on the ballot paper there will only be a single candidate and an empty box. This is the first time this has happened in Maros Regency throughout history during the regional head election being held democratically.

In addition, in South Sulawesi province, Maros Regency is the only regency that has only one candidate pair. Although from the initial stage to the end, the sole candidate is the incumbent himself. However, the incumbent in question is the candidate for regent, while the candidate for deputy regent changed in the middle of the registration process. The advantage of the incumbent is that the candidate for Maros Regent has been involved in politics in Maros Regency for a long time, having joined the Amanat Nasional Party in 1999, becoming a member of the Maros Regency Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) in 2009, and serving as chairman of the Maros Regency

DPRD in 2014 and 2019 before becoming Maros Regent from 2020 to 2024. Thus, his career trajectory constitutes a unique strength for the incumbent. Additionally, Chaidir Syam has implemented a democratic governance system and leadership style, and possesses a strong personality (Akhmad et al., 2023).

The phenomenon of single candidates poses problems for Indonesia, which has entered a period of democratic consolidation. The existence of this single candidate phenomenon is reminiscent of the pre-reform era, where the process of electing leaders was marked by only one candidate (Rahman et al., 2022). According to Rofi Aulia Rahman, the existing party support threshold and administrative requirements for independent candidates facilitate the existence of single candidates, making it difficult for alternative candidates to gain support.

Ideal electoral competition is competition between two or more candidates so that there is healthy competition between candidates that can be directly observed, assessed, and determined by voters, in line with (Ordeshook, 2014), who demonstrates that in equilibrium conditions, two candidates still produce Pareto-optimal policies.

Electoral equilibrium in an ideal context means that there will be strategic stability between candidates or parties so that voter preferences can be represented and manipulation in general elections can be minimized. The result will be a Pareto-optimal policy, or in other words, a policy that maximizes benefits. The dynamics of a single candidate will affect dissatisfied voters because there are no alternative choices, and healthy political competition will be difficult to achieve. Legally, regulations regarding blank ballots and majority vote requirements are necessary to avoid local authoritarian tendencies—the theory of electoral justice fairness is relevant as a policy reference.

“Implementation of the Election of a Single Regional Head Candidate in the Democratic System in Indonesia (Study of Constitutional Court Decision Number.100/PUU-XIII/2015)”, The research conducted examines the Constitutional Court Decision Study on Single regional head candidates in a democratic system, (Afif, 2024). The research conducted by (Marbun, Silas, & Nurzaman, 2020), discussing the Koko (Empty Box) political movement formed by the Humbang Hasundutan Democracy Care Forum (FPDHH) in the 2020 Humbang Hasundutan Regional Head Election as a response to the single candidate in the Regional Head Election in the area. Several studies discuss the process and factors of the birth of the empty box and the response to the Single candidate so that the Empty Box Political Movement emerged.

So what is different from the research conducted is that the researcher wants to analyze the causes of the existence of a Single candidate that can occur in the regional head election of Maros Regency and analyze the capital owned by the Single candidate, therefore this research is to analyze the existence of a Single candidate in the 2024 regional head election in Maros Regency.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method with a deductive approach, which begins by drawing insights from existing theories and then examining specific aspects of social reality to assess their relevance. As Yin (2014) notes, qualitative research is suitable for understanding complex social phenomena within their real-life contexts, making it appropriate for examining the existence of single candidates in regional elections. The

descriptive design allows the research to capture an in-depth understanding rather than broad generalizations.

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants selected using purposive sampling, a technique widely used in qualitative inquiry to ensure relevance to research objectives (Creswell, 2018). The informants consisted of representatives from the election commission, academia, youth organizations, and community leaders, whose perspectives provided diverse and complementary insights. To complement these interviews, secondary data were also obtained from regulations, official documents, online publications, and scholarly journals to enrich the analysis.

The data were analyzed qualitatively through systematic interpretation, where interview transcripts and documents were categorized and compared. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, this study applied reflexivity and triangulation, which are essential techniques in qualitative research for validating findings across multiple sources (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2018). The field research was conducted in Maros Regency, South Sulawesi, the only district in the province with a single candidate in the 2024 election, during the period from August to October 2024.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Maros Regency consists of 14 Districts, some of which have been renamed according to their historical footprints. The Districts are Bantimurung, Bontoa, Camba, Cenrana, Lau, Mallawa, Mandai, Maros Baru, Marusu, Moncongloe, Simbang, Tanralili, Tompobulu and Turikale Districts, (Maros, 2024).

The vision of Maros Regency for 2021-2024 is "Prosperous, Religious and Competitive Maros." While the Mission of Maros Regency for 2021-2024 is as follows:

1. Improving the Quality of Bureaucratic and Public Service Implementation
2. Inclusive Accessibility of Basic Needs and Basic Services
3. Regional Economic Resilience Based on Local Potential
4. Strengthening Economic Infrastructure Development and Regional Equity
5. Improving Environmental Quality and Planning Resilience

The 2025 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) will be a major milestone as they will be held simultaneously across Indonesia. The elections will be conducted at both the provincial and district/city levels. The Pilkada in Maros District has attracted significant attention in Indonesia's political landscape as it reflects a national phenomenon, namely the presence of a single candidate in local democratic contests. Maros Regent Chaidir Syam is running for re-election without opposition, similar to what has occurred in other regions across Indonesia. This is due to his dominant support from major political parties in Maros Regency and his high public approval ratings. This phenomenon of a single candidate signifies two sides of democracy: on one hand, it reflects the success of the region in establishing political legitimacy and government performance that is positively evaluated by the public; on the other hand, it raises concerns that competition may not occur and could weaken political opposition at the local level.

Overall in Indonesia, this phenomenon is not only occurring in South Sulawesi Province, specifically in Maros Regency, but is also evident in various other regions such as several regencies in East Java and Kalimantan. The similarity in this pattern indicates that an increasing number of regional leaders are able to build cross-party electoral power and reduce the space for alternative candidates. The

2025 Maros Regional Election with a single candidate reflects how local dynamics are shaping the pragmatic face of Indonesian democracy, where the incumbent's electoral strength is co-opted, yet simultaneously challenging the spirit of competitive political participation.

Registration Stages for Prospective Pairs of Regent and Deputy Regent of Maros 2024

Direct regional elections basically aim to; *first*, to realize effective regional government, institutionalize and deepen local democracy. *Second*, to produce quality regional heads. Local elections are an effort to sharpen empathy for the will and concerns of the people in order to make policies that favor the public interest. *Third*, actualize the representation of local interests so that regional policies are more explicitly in favor of the interests of the people. And fourth, increase the competitiveness of regional independence according to local advantages and wisdom, (Hulu, 2021).

The Regional Head who acts as the head of the administrative region is the main person responsible for organizing government in the region. It is in the hands of the regional head that a region will be assessed as successful or failed, where the people and the central government (President) have the right to evaluate it factually and comprehensively, (Sulaeman, 2015). Regional Heads both at the provincial and district levels will be faced with the people's assessment because the people have chosen them in the regional head elections, and regional heads still have an assessment from the central government as part of the territory of the Republic of Indonesia.

The pair of Regent and Deputy Regent for the 2019-2024 period in Maros Regency has expired their term of office so they are re-nominating as candidate pairs in the 2024 simultaneous regional elections. As a pair who are incumbents, in the process of nominating prospective candidates for regent and deputy regent of Maros Regency, the Maros Regency General Election Commission (KPU) has opened registration for prospective candidates several times. The stages of registration for candidates for Regent and Deputy Regent of Maros Regency are based on the Commissioners of the Maros General Election Commission as stipulated in the Constitutional Court Decision No. 60 / PPU - XXII / 2024 and Legal Considerations No. 70 / PPU - XXII / 2024 Stages of Registration for Candidate Pairs for Regent and Deputy Regent of Maros 2024 as follows:

Table 1. Registration Stages for Candidate Pairs for Regent and Deputy Regent of Maros 2024

No	Date	Registration Stages
1	27-29 Agustus 2024	Registration Process for Candidate Pairs for Regent and Deputy Regent (first)
2	30 Agustus - 1 September 2024	Announcement of extension of Registration Process for Candidate Pairs for Regent and Deputy Regent
3	2 - 4 September 2024	Extension of Registration Process for Candidate Pairs for Regent and Deputy Regent (second)
4	5-6 September 2024	Health Examination Stage (first)
5	7 September 2024	Results of Administrative Research for Candidate Pairs Will Be Announced

6	8-10 September 2024	Improvement or Appointment of Replacement Candidates.
7	11 September 2024	Health Examination Stage (replacement candidates)
8	12-13 September 2024	Research of Files and Document Requirements for Replacement Candidates
9	14 September 2024	Announcement of Replacement Candidates declared to meet the requirements
10	22 September 2024	Announcing the Results of the Final Determination

Source: General Election Commission of Maros Regency, 2024.

Above is a schedule of the stages of the registration process for prospective Regent and Deputy Regent of Maros Regency. But after the end of the registration period, only one pair of prospective candidates (paslon) registered so that according to PKPU 10 of 2024 and KPU Decree Number 1229 of 2024 it explains that if only one pair of candidates registers, registration can be extended. So the extension was carried out from 2 to 4 September 2024 which was previously announced on 30 August to 1 September 2024.

The process of the birth of a Single Candidate in the Regional Head Election in Maros Regency

According to Rini in (Marbun, Silas, & Nurzaman, 2020), the phenomenon of the birth of a Single Candidate is a situation that is normatively unimaginable as the concept of democracy in its implementation continues to develop and is influenced by a political system that occurs in a region. Single candidates in simultaneous regional elections that occur in several regions in Indonesia are a form of empirical democracy. And according to Harahap, The phenomenon of a single candidate is a form of decline in democracy. Democracy basically requires the creation of competition and participation. The phenomenon of a single candidate does not present a competitive democratic system because the public does not have the option to compare the ideas, ideas, vision and mission or work programs offered by regional head candidates. The phenomenon of the birth of a single candidate is also inseparable from the decision of the Constitutional Court (MK) Number 100/PUU-XIII/2015 which decided to provide space for single candidates to run as regional election participants, (Harahap & Kosandi, 2024).

Before the determination of the Single candidate pair and the empty box in Maros Regency, several events occurred and were important to discuss, starting from the registration of prospective candidates, extension of registration, the existence of a Single candidate pair, and when the candidate had been determined and then continued to the Health examination stage, one of the pairs was declared unable to advance in the regional elections and a change in formation had to be made so that there was a process of submitting a replacement for the candidate pair for Regent and Deputy Regent. In the first nomination process, Chaedir Syam was paired with his partner in the previous period, namely Suhartina Bohari. However, in the nomination process, the prospective candidate for deputy regent-Suhartina Bohari was declared not to meet the requirements (TMS). So on September 9, the Chaidir Syam pair registered Muetazim Mansyur as a prospective candidate for deputy regent. Muetazim Mansyur is not a legislator or a member of a political party but is a State Civil Apparatus (ASN) who

serves as Head of the Public Works, Spatial Planning, Transportation, and Land Agency (PUTRPP) of Maros Regency, (Hendra Cipto, 2024).

After the change in the deputy regent candidate, support emerged in online or print media such as banners and billboards on the streets that voiced the need to choose the empty box and issues arose about regionalism. However, the initial issues, namely that there were other candidates who would register and advance in the regional head election and would compete with the Chaidir Syam - Muetazim Mansyur pair, were just issues because until the final determination of the regent candidate by the General Election Commission (KPU), there was still only 1 (one) pair or Single candidate.

Analysis of Factors Causing the Birth of a Single Candidate in the Regional Election in Maros Regency

The incumbent candidate in the Maros Regency regional election, Chaedir Syam - Muetazim Mansyur as the incumbent pair has enormous capital and opportunities. The power that still exists and is influential and the strength of supporters from cadres and parties, especially the PAN party - National Mandate Party. The Regent Candidate as a cadre is very large and able to exert pressure. This is proven by the fact that no candidates appeared in the Maros Regency regional election in 2024.

The emergence of a single candidate in the simultaneous regional elections in Maros Regency cannot be separated from the map of political power in the political dynamics that emerged ahead of the start of the simultaneous regional election stages. The strength of the incumbent is not only in terms of power but the support of the party in the DPRD that supports this pair is also a strength because all parties support the pair.

1. Strength of the Candidate for Regent of Maros Regency

Chaedir Syam is the chairman of the DPD of the National Mandate Party (PAN) of Maros Regency and has been a PAN cadre since 1999 and has never changed parties. His existence in Maros Regency is unquestionable, at the beginning of his career he became a member of the legislature through an interim replacement (PAW), then became a member of the legislature through direct elections 2 (two) times and became a participant in the legislative election with the most votes and was elected as the regent of Maros in the 2019-2024 period. At the end of his term of office, he will then run again as regent and there is no news about other candidates who will run against him in the 2024-2029 regional elections.

Regional heads are directly elected by the people in the region through regional head elections (pilkada) when the term of office of the regional head has ended. The term of office of the regional head is 5 (five) years in 1 (one) period calculated from the inauguration. Regional heads who have only served 1 (one) period can run again in the next regional election. Maros Regent-Chaidir Syam is running again for the 2024-2029 term.

The incumbent candidate is a candidate who was the previous leader. As in Maros Regency, only incumbents are running in political contests. So that support from various groups can be obtained both from political parties and the community. In the context of general elections, incumbent candidates often have several advantages compared to new candidates, such as public recognition, experience in carrying out duties, and support from political networks and larger resources, (Mulyadia, et al., Jurnal Hukum IUS Publicum).

Regional head elections that are only participated by one pair of candidates in a region that holds regional head elections. This usually occurs because of a power struggle., (Hulu, 2021).The power possessed by the Marosm Regent Candidate Chaidir Syam is because of the

power of Capital. Capital Power according to Bourdieu (Haryanto, 2014), as actual and potential wealth that is tied to the ownership of a network of more or less structured relationships of recognition and recognition. Bourdieu divides capital into four large parts, namely economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. Of the four capital powers mentioned, there are 2 (two) that are depicted in the research conducted, namely:

- 1) Social Capital. According to Bourdieu in (Haryanto, 2014) this capital is a potential related to ownership of institutionalized relations, leading to membership in an organization. In terms of social capital, Chaidir Syam holds great control as seen from his existence being maintained in several organizations. The popularity that is built is a factor that becomes the strength that is owned. In addition to being the party leader, Chaidir Syam remains active in other organizations such as KNPI and Muhammadiyah. His popularity is accompanied by charisma and authority, a popular leader according to Koenjaraningrat in (Hulu, 2021) is a leader who is known to the public as an actor who has traits that are liked and aspired to by many people (constituents). The social network that is owned has existed in the previous regional elections.
- 2) Symbolic Capital. In the form of names, titles, levels, positions or honors can be agents as extraordinary members in a particular group. Every capital (economic, cultural and social) can function as symbolic capital. The ideological basis concerned as the social capital of the community activities that he has been carrying out so far. For example, activists of mass organizations, NGOs, or other organizations that have the largest members or sympathizers everywhere, (Hulu, 2021). As in social capital, symbolic capital is the position held by Chaidir Syam and the influence of his leadership pattern is popular so that the community likes and feels satisfied with it.

2. Strength of Support from Political Parties

The main and first function of political parties is to seek and maintain power in order to realize programs that are based on a certain ideology, (Sulaeman, 2015). Political parties are the only organizations recognized by government institutions to nominate and support a person or candidate pair in political contests such as regional elections.

The existence of incumbent power and uneven coalition formation of parties in the election can directly reduce or eliminate the opportunity for other political parties to participate in the election. So far, candidates' nomination by political parties turns out to pay more attention to the incumbent electability or popularity of the candidates to be carried by them and without assuming to party ideology. Political parties in determining coalitions and candidates in the Regional Head Election are because the purpose of political parties to participate in the contestation is only a victory to gain power, (Rosanti, 2020).

Based on the Regulation of the General Election Commission Number 8 of 2024 concerning the Nomination of Governor and Deputy Governor, Regent and Deputy Regent, and Mayor and Deputy Mayor, Candidates for Regent and Candidates for Deputy Regent explain that Candidates for Mayor and Candidates for Deputy Mayor are Election participants proposed by Political Parties Participating in the Election, Coalitions of Political Parties Participating in the Election, or individuals who are registered or register with the Regency/City KPU.

Political Parties Participating in the Election or Coalitions of Political Parties Participating in the Election may register Candidate Pairs if they have met the requirements for obtaining at least 20% (twenty percent) of the total number of DPRD seats or 25% (twenty five percent) of the accumulation of valid votes in the Election for DPRD members in the relevant region, (General Election Commission, 2024).

There were 24 (twenty four) parties in Maros Regency that participated in the legislative election and 9 (nine) parties that succeeded in sitting in the legislative seats. Meanwhile, the Chaidri Syam-Muetazim Mansyur pair was supported by 16 (sixteen) political parties including all parties sitting in the DPRD seats. The supporting political parties are the Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN), Golongan Karya (Golkar), Nasional Demokrasi (Nasdem), Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS), Gerindra, Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB), Demokrat, Hati Nurani Rakyat (Hanura), Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB), PDI Perjuangan, Gelora, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP), Perindo, Partai Solidaritas Indonesia (PSI), Partai Buruh and Partai Kebangkitan Nusantara (PKN), (Said, 2024).

Based on the KPU Regulation, it can be ascertained that the Chaidri Syam-Muetazim Mansyur pair meets the requirements for the number of votes and seats in the Maros Regency DPRD as seen from the number of supporting parties. In Maros Regency, Chaidir Syam as the chairman of the Maros Regency National Mandate Party DPD made PAN's support a definite reference to his candidacy. Although Chaidir Syam in the registration process changed the candidate pair for deputy regent, it did not change the parties that previously supported him. The Chaidir Syam-Muetazim Mansyur pair is still supported by 16 (sixteen) political parties. The influence of the support of these political parties is one of the strengths possessed by the pair.

The above is in line with what was found in his research that the factors that caused the occurrence of single candidates were political parties choosing to form coalitions rather than nominating their own cadres and there were institutional obstacles in the form of regulations that prevented the emergence of many potential candidates who had the potential to advance in the Regional Head Election, (Marefi, 2022). This condition is strengthened by the culture of political parties that tend to provide support to candidates who possess a greater chance of winning in order to take control of the government and form political cartels. Although presently it has not been indicated that single candidates are a form of oligarchic rule and political dynasty, it may become an easy way to obtain political power, (Safa'at, 2022).

There are 3 (three) factors causing the absence of other candidates so that empty boxes appear because first, the fat coalition causes parties that are not part of the coalition to be reluctant to nominate prospective candidates because their calculations when fighting the fat coalition result in a lack of confidence in the supporting party or the candidate they will nominate, (Wati, 2024). And uncertainty about the chances of winning makes small parties reluctant to nominate candidates, which in turn exacerbates the phenomenon of single candidates or empty boxes in elections. This indicates that even though there are many choices of candidates, the existing support structure tends to limit the dynamics of competition at the regional level, (Mulyadia, et al., Jurnal Hukum IUS Publicum).

CONCLUSION

Regional head elections that only have a single candidate will compete with an empty box. The election will be different from elections with 2 (two) or more candidates. In the election process, it will indeed appear the same, namely the presence of ballot papers depicting 2 (two) images, as if there is a choice between 1 pair and another pair even though on the ballot paper

there is only 1 (one) photo of the pair and 1 (one) is just a white image. There is also a striking difference in the voting results with the rules of the regional election that has 2 (pairs) of candidates or more. According to the Constitutional Court decision No. 100 / PUU-XIII / 2015 concerning Single candidates, if the vote count results show that the Single candidate pair wins against the empty box candidate pair, then the Single candidate pair will be determined as the elected candidate pair, conversely if the single candidate pair loses against the empty box candidate, then the regional head election will be repeated or postponed until the next simultaneous election. There are several factors that caused the birth of the Single Candidate Pair, namely, firstly, the strength of Chaidir Syam as the incumbent candidate for Regent of Maros and the strength of support from all political parties sitting in parliament in Maros Regency.

This research shows that the phenomena that occur are not coincidental, but are the result of complex interactions of both the incumbent's political power, the weakness of the opposition, and also the institutional structure of political parties that tend to be pragmatic. The main causal mechanism is the incumbent's dominance in political resources such as access to bureaucracy, local elite networks, and mass mobilization capabilities that hinder the emergence of competitive competitors. The electoral power of the incumbent is strengthened by the party coalition that is built. The generalization of these findings to other regions in Indonesia cannot be generalized. Although the single candidate pattern occurs in various regions, the context of Maros Regency has specificities, such as the configuration of local power, the demographic and socio-political characteristics of the community, and the history of relations between political elites. Thus, the results of this study are more appropriately categorized as contextual findings, which can provide an analytical basis for comparative studies in other regions, but are not necessarily universally applicable.

Thus, this research has limitations and possible biases that need to be observed in understanding and interpreting the results of the analysis, such as limitations in the representation of sources that risk information selection bias so that more critical views can be underrepresented. In addition, the unique local context of Maros, such as family-based social power and local patronage, cannot be fully generalized to other regions with different socio-political structures. And finally, there is a lack of supporting quantitative data such as public opinion surveys on the sole candidate.

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