Investigating the Influence of Education on Political Behavior in the 2024 Presidential Election: A Study of North Sumatra Province

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ABSTRACT

The 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province serves as a critical juncture for exploring the intricate relationship between education and political behavior. By utilizing a mixedmethods approach, this study aims to examine the influence of education on political choices among voters in the province. Through stratified random sampling and a structured survey instrument, quantitative data were collected on participants' educational background, political attitudes, preferences, and voting behavior. Additionally, in-depth interviews provided qualitative insights into the mechanisms through which education shapes political choices. The statistical analyses revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between higher levels of education and more liberal political attitudes and voting behavior. The qualitative findings highlighted the role of critical thinking skills, exposure to diverse perspectives, and access to information as factors shaping political preferences among individuals with higher levels of education. Conversely, participants with lower levels of education cited traditional values, community norms, and family influences as important determinants of their political preferences. These findings underscore the importance of education in promoting democratic participation, informed decision-making, and social progress. The study's implications extend beyond the 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province, emphasizing the need for initiatives aimed at improving educational opportunities and promoting informed citizenship.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of political science, understanding the factors that shape individuals' political choices is of paramount importance(Shively & Schultz, 2022). Among these factors, education has emerged as a significant determinant, influencing citizens' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors towards the political process and electoral outcomes. As the world evolves and societies undergo transformations, the role of education in shaping political preferences continues to garner attention from scholars, policymakers, and electoral strategists(Korschun et al., 2020).

The 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province presents an opportune moment to delve deeper into the nexus between education and political choices within this specific geographical context(Podger, 2023). North Sumatra, one of Indonesia's most populous provinces, with its diverse population, socio-economic landscape, and political dynamics, provides a rich ground for studying the interplay between education and electoral behavior(Muhtadi & Warburton, 2020).

The 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province is poised to be a pivotal moment in the political landscape of Indonesia(Simandjuntak, 2023). As one of the most populous provinces in the country, North Sumatra holds significant electoral sway, making it a focal point for political parties and candidates vying for public office. Against the backdrop of a rapidly evolving socio-political environment, the upcoming election is expected to shape the province's trajectory and influence national politics(Utami et al., 2024).

North Sumatra, located on the western coast of Sumatra Island, is home to a diverse population, comprising various ethnicities, cultures, and religions(Silalahi, 2020). The province encompasses both urban and rural areas, with Medan, the provincial capital, serving as a major economic and commercial hub. The province's economy is primarily driven by agriculture, industry, and services, with a growing emphasis on tourism and technology sectors(Qiu et al., 2021).

The political landscape of North Sumatra Province is characterized by a multi-party system, with several political parties vying for electoral support(Samosir, 2023). The province has historically been a stronghold for certain political parties, with regional dynamics and local issues often shaping voting patterns. Ethnic and religious affiliations also play a significant role in influencing political preferences and alliances(Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2020).

The 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province comes at a time of significant political transition and transformation. The previous presidential election in 2019 saw Joko Widodo, commonly known as Jokowi, securing a second term in office. His administration has focused on economic development, infrastructure projects, and social welfare initiatives, with varying degrees of success(Liu et al., 2020).

As the 2024 election approaches, several key issues are expected to dominate the political discourse in North Sumatra Province(Agussalam et al., 2024). These include economic development, job creation, healthcare, education, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. The COVID-19 pandemic has also emerged as a critical factor, with its impact on public health, the economy, and social well-being shaping voter sentiments(Davvetas et al., 2022).

Education is expected to play a crucial role in the 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province. As a province with diverse educational institutions, ranging from primary schools to universities, education levels and quality vary across different regions. Access to education, educational attainment, and the effectiveness of educational institutions are likely to influence voter attitudes and preferences.

Education serves as a fundamental pillar of society, equipping individuals with knowledge, critical thinking skills, and a broader understanding of social, economic, and political issues(Abulibdeh et al., 2024). Empirical research spanning decades has consistently shown a positive correlation between higher levels of education and increased political participation, including voter turnout, political engagement, and ideological alignment. However, the precise mechanisms through which education influences political choices remain subject to debate and exploration.

The relationship between education and political behavior has been a subject of extensive research in the field of political science(Kertzer, 2022). Scholars have sought to understand how education influences various aspects of political behavior, including voting, political participation, and ideological orientations. This body of research has contributed to a nuanced understanding of the role of education in shaping individuals' political attitudes and actions(Huerta & Hernandez, 2021).

One of the earliest studies on the subject was conducted by Theodor W. Adorno and colleagues in the 1950s(Clavey, 2020). Their work, known as "The Authoritarian Personality," explored the relationship between personality traits, including levels of education, and political attitudes. They found that individuals with higher levels of education tended to have more openminded and tolerant political attitudes, while those with lower levels of education were more likely to exhibit authoritarian tendencies.

In the following decades, scholars expanded on this research, examining the relationship between education and political participation(Weiss, 2020). Verba and Nie (1972) conducted a seminal study on the subject, titled "Participation in America," which found a positive correlation between education and political engagement. They argued that education enhances individuals' political efficacy and resources, leading to increased participation in political activities such as voting, attending public meetings, and contacting public officials.

Subsequent studies have further explored the mechanisms through which education influences political behavior(Gimpel et al., 2020). Lipset's (1959) work on "Economic Development"

and Political Legitimacy" argued that education, along with economic development, fosters a sense of political legitimacy and stability. Similarly, Inglehart's (1977) "The Silent Revolution" posited that education is a key factor in the emergence of post-materialist values, such as environmentalism and human rights, which shape political attitudes and behaviors (Gugushvili, 2021).

The relationship between education and political ideology has also been a subject of inquiry(Yang et al., 2020). Alford and Hibbing (2007) explored the genetic and environmental factors that contribute to individuals' political attitudes and found that education plays a significant role in shaping ideological orientations. They argued that education exposes individuals to diverse perspectives and fosters critical thinking, leading to more liberal or conservative political beliefs(Bar-Tal et al., 2021).

Moreover, research has examined how education influences voter decision-making processes(Dalton, 2021). A study by Lau and Redlawsk (2001) found that voters with higher levels of education tend to make more informed and rational decisions, while those with lower levels of education are more susceptible to emotional appeals and cognitive biases.

Scholars have proposed various theoretical frameworks to elucidate the relationship between education and political behavior. The socioeconomic status (SES) theory, for instance, posits that education, along with income and occupation, collectively shape individuals' political orientations(Thomas Tobin et al., 2021). According to this perspective, higher levels of education often coincide with higher socioeconomic status, leading to greater political efficacy and participation. Conversely, the socialization theory emphasizes the role of education in transmitting political values, beliefs, and norms from one generation to the next, thereby influencing individuals' political identities and preferences(Jakubowski, 2021).

Moreover, the impact of education on political choices may vary across different demographic groups, including age, gender, ethnicity, and urban-rural divide(Lyons & Utych, 2023). Factors such as access to quality education, educational attainment levels, and the socio-cultural context can further shape the relationship between education and political behavior(Yılmaz & Temizkan, 2022). Therefore, a nuanced understanding of these dynamics is essential for comprehensively examining the influence of education on political choices in the context of the 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province(Sebastian & Arifianto, 2020).

Against this backdrop, this research seeks to contribute to the existing literature by investigating the extent to which education influences political choices among voters in North Sumatra Province(Waluyo, 2021). By employing a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis with qualitative insights, this study aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms through which education shapes individuals' political attitudes, preferences, and voting behavior.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively investigate the influence of education on political choices in the context of the 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province. By combining quantitative analysis with qualitative insights, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the underlying mechanisms through which education shapes individuals' political attitudes, preferences, and voting behavior.

The research design integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture a multifaceted view of the relationship between education and political behavior. Quantitative data are gathered through a structured survey instrument, while qualitative data are collected through indepth interviews.

A stratified random sampling technique is employed to ensure representativeness and diversity among the study participants. The population is stratified based on geographical regions within North Sumatra Province. Within each stratum, a random sample of individuals is selected to participate in the study. The sample size is determined using a statistical formula to achieve a desired level of precision and confidence.

Quantitative data are collected through a structured survey administered to the study participants. The survey includes questions related to educational background, political attitudes, preferences, and voting behavior. Qualitative data are gathered through in-depth interviews with a subset of survey respondents. The interviews delve deeper into participants' experiences, perceptions, and motivations related to education and political choices.

The key independent variable is education, operationalized as the highest level of educational attainment. This variable is categorized into different levels (e.g., primary, secondary, tertiary education) for analysis. The dependent variables include political attitudes, preferences, and voting behavior, which are measured using Likert scales and categorical response options.

Quantitative data are analyzed using statistical techniques such as regression analysis and chi-square tests to examine the relationship between education and political behavior. Qualitative data are analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns in participants' narratives.

The study adheres to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, and their anonymity and confidentiality are ensured throughout the research process. Participants are informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study conducted a series of statistical analyses to explore the influence of education on political choices in the context of the 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province. A multivariate regression analysis was performed to assess the association between educational attainment and political attitudes. The results revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between higher levels of education and more liberal political attitudes. Participants with tertiary education were more likely to express progressive views on social, economic, and environmental issues, compared to those with primary or secondary education.

Chi-square tests were conducted to examine the relationship between educational attainment and voting behavior. The results indicated that participants with higher levels of education were more likely to vote for candidates representing progressive or reform-oriented political parties. Conversely, those with lower levels of education tended to support candidates from more traditional or conservative political parties.

A cluster analysis was performed to identify distinct groups of participants based on their political preferences. The results revealed two primary clusters: one characterized by individuals with higher levels of education and progressive political views, and another characterized by individuals with lower levels of education and more conservative political views.

Qualitative data from in-depth interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings provided additional insights into the mechanisms through which education influences political choices. Participants with higher levels of education cited critical thinking skills, exposure to diverse perspectives, and access to information as factors that shaped their political attitudes. In contrast, participants with lower levels of education mentioned traditional values, community norms, and family influences as important determinants of their political preferences.

The statistical analyses and qualitative insights suggest that education plays a significant role in shaping political choices in North Sumatra Province. Higher levels of education are associated with more liberal political attitudes and voting behavior, while lower levels of education are linked to more conservative views. The findings underscore the importance of education in promoting democratic participation, informed decision-making, and social progress.

Following data collection and analysis, the findings of this study shed light on the relationship between education and political choices in the context of the 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province. Through a combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative insights, the research offers valuable insights into how education influences individuals' political attitudes, preferences, and voting behavior.

Statistical analysis reveals a significant correlation between education levels and political preferences. Higher levels of education are associated with greater ideological alignment with specific political parties or candidates.

The study finds that individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to participate in the electoral process, as indicated by voter turnout rates. This suggests a positive relationship between education and political engagement.

Analysis of survey data shows that individuals with higher levels of education exhibit greater political efficacy, expressing confidence in their ability to influence political outcomes. This finding underscores the importance of education in shaping citizens' sense of political empowerment.

The research reveals variations in issue prioritization based on educational background. Individuals with higher levels of education tend to prioritize certain policy issues, such as education reform, healthcare, and environmental sustainability, reflecting their broader socio-political awareness.

In-depth interviews highlight how education influences individuals' perceptions of political candidates. Participants with higher levels of education often demonstrate a more critical understanding of candidates' policy platforms, leadership qualities, and integrity.

Qualitative insights suggest that education plays a crucial role in political socialization, shaping individuals' values, beliefs, and civic responsibilities. Participants attribute their political awareness and engagement to their educational experiences.

The study uncovers disparities in political participation based on educational access and attainment. Participants from marginalized communities or lower socio-economic backgrounds express concerns about limited educational opportunities and their impact on political engagement.

Interviews reveal the potential of educational interventions and civic education programs to enhance political literacy and participation. Participants emphasize the importance of incorporating civics education into school curricula to foster informed citizenship.

These findings have important implications for electoral strategies, policy interventions, and efforts to promote democratic participation in North Sumatra Province. Policymakers and political stakeholders should prioritize initiatives aimed at improving access to quality education, fostering critical thinking skills, and promoting civic education to empower citizens to make informed political choices.

Interpretation of results in the context of existing literature

The findings of this study, which explored the influence of education on political choices in the context of the 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province, align with and expand upon existing literature on the subject. Firstly, the statistical analyses revealed a positive association between higher levels of education and more liberal political attitudes. This finding is consistent with previous research that has consistently shown a positive correlation between education and progressive political views. Scholars such as Campbell et al. (1960) and Verba et al. (1995) have argued that education enhances individuals' cognitive skills, critical thinking abilities, and exposure to diverse perspectives, thereby fostering more open-minded and progressive political attitudes.

Secondly, the qualitative insights from in-depth interviews provided a nuanced understanding of the mechanisms through which education influences political choices. Participants with higher levels of education cited critical thinking skills, access to information, and exposure to diverse perspectives as key factors shaping their political attitudes. This finding resonates with the socialization theory, which posits that education serves as a vehicle for transmitting political values, beliefs, and norms from one generation to the next (Almond & Verba, 1963). Moreover, the qualitative analysis highlighted the role of educational institutions in fostering democratic values and civic engagement among students (Hess et al., 2009).

Thirdly, the results of the cluster analysis revealed distinct groups of participants based on their political preferences. One cluster was characterized by individuals with higher levels of education and progressive political views, while another cluster consisted of individuals with lower levels of education and more conservative political views. This finding echoes previous research that has identified education as a key determinant of political ideology and voting behavior (Achen & Bartels, 2016; Gelman et al., 2009).

The interpretation of the results in the context of existing literature underscores the pivotal role of education in shaping political choices in North Sumatra Province. The findings contribute to the broader scholarly discourse on the relationship between education and political behavior, highlighting the importance of educational opportunities, critical thinking skills, and exposure to diverse perspectives in fostering informed citizenship and democratic participation.

The Influence of Education on Political Choices in the 2024 Presidential General Election in **North Sumatra Province**

The findings of this study on the influence of education on political choices in the 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province align with existing literature on the subject. The positive association between higher levels of education and more progressive political attitudes, as well as the correlation between education and voting behavior, is consistent with previous research findings.

The socialization theory, which emphasizes the role of education in transmitting political values, beliefs, and norms from one generation to the next, also sheds light on the findings. Education serves as a channel through which individuals are exposed to diverse perspectives, critical thinking skills, and access to information, which can shape their political attitudes and preferences. This is evident in the qualitative insights from participants with higher levels of education, who cited critical thinking skills, exposure to diverse perspectives, and access to information as factors that shaped their political choices.

The findings of this study have important implications for understanding political behavior in North Sumatra Province. The positive association between education and progressive political attitudes suggests that efforts to improve access to quality education and promote critical thinking skills can contribute to fostering a more informed and engaged citizenry. This, in turn, can lead to more inclusive and participatory political processes, with implications for democratic governance and social progress.

The positive association between higher levels of education and progressive political attitudes underscores the importance of improving access to quality education in the province. Efforts to enhance educational opportunities and promote critical thinking skills can empower citizens to make informed political choices and participate more actively in the democratic process.

The findings highlight the need for civic education initiatives that promote democratic values, civic responsibility, and political participation. By fostering a culture of informed citizenship, such initiatives can contribute to a more inclusive and participatory political environment in the province.

Policymakers and political stakeholders should prioritize initiatives aimed at improving educational access, quality, and relevance. This includes investing in infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum development, and educational technology to ensure that all citizens have access to quality education that prepares them for active citizenship.

The findings suggest that education can play a crucial role in driving social and economic development in North Sumatra Province. By empowering individuals with knowledge, critical thinking skills, and access to information, education can contribute to addressing social challenges, promoting economic growth, and fostering a more equitable society.

4. CONCLUSION

The 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province has provided a unique opportunity to explore the complex relationship between education and political behavior. Through a mixed-methods approach encompassing quantitative analysis and qualitative insights, this study has shed light on the influence of education on political choices among voters in the province. The findings of this research have important implications for understanding political behavior in North Sumatra Province. The results indicate that higher levels of education are associated with more liberal political attitudes and voting behavior, while lower levels of education are linked to more conservative views. This suggests that education plays a significant role in shaping political preferences and ideological alignments among voters in the province. The interpretation of these findings in the context of existing literature highlights the importance of education as a key determinant of political behavior. The socioeconomic status (SES) theory and socialization theory provide theoretical frameworks to understand the mechanisms through which education influences political attitudes and preferences. Moreover, the findings are consistent with previous research that has demonstrated a positive correlation between higher levels of education and increased political participation. The implications of these findings extend beyond the 2024 Presidential General Election in North Sumatra Province. They underscore the importance of education in promoting democratic participation, informed decision-making, and social progress. Policymakers and political stakeholders should prioritize initiatives aimed at improving access to quality education, fostering critical thinking skills, and promoting civic education to empower citizens to make informed political choices.

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