



Political Participation of Deaf with Disabilities: A Case Study of GerkatIn Tasikmalaya City in the 2024 Local Election

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Abstract

Background This study examines the political participation of deaf persons with disabilities in Tasikmalaya City during the 2024 Local Election. It aims to understand their forms of participation, levels of involvement, and the barriers they face through the GerkatIn organization as a platform for collective action and advocacy.

Methods The research used a qualitative case study approach. This research uses primary data derived from interviews collected directly by researchers or parties requiring data through field collection techniques. Secondary data is obtained from previous research or other sources such as books, journals, and other references related to the research topic. Data validation applied source and technical triangulation.

Results The findings show that most GerkatIn members participated through conventional forms, such as voting and limited political discussions. However, their participation was constrained by communication barriers and a lack of disability-friendly political spaces. Despite these challenges, GerkatIn has played a significant role in motivating its members to exercise their voting rights and providing a collective space for self-empowerment.

Conclusions Deaf persons with disabilities in Tasikmalaya have participated in 2024 local elections but remain at the observer level of political engagement. Greater accessibility and inclusive political education are needed to enhance their meaningful participation.

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Keywords

Key words: *political participation; GerkatIn; Election; Deaf; Dissabilities*

Introduction

Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) are a concrete form of the implementation of democracy in Indonesia, which is a basic right of every citizen. This is emphasized in the 1945 Constitution, Article 18 paragraph (4), which states that Governors, Regents, and Mayors as government leaders at the provincial, district, and city levels must be elected through a democratic mechanism. Indonesia is a country that adheres to a democratic system of government, where the public is given the broadest possible freedom to participate in determining the direction of national development. One concrete form of this participation is through the implementation of general elections and regional elections, which are carried out directly, publicly, freely, and secretly.

Regional elections are a mechanism for determining public opinion directly, with the aim of electing leaders at the regional level, such as governors, district heads, and mayors, who will carry out executive functions. Political participation is a form of action carried out voluntarily and based on individual awareness, without pressure or coercion from any party. Therefore, political participation is closely related to the level of public understanding of the political process ([Miaz, 2012](#)). In a democratic country, the concept of political participation is rooted in the belief that supreme power rests with the people, and is realized through collective involvement in determining the direction, goals, and future of society, and in determining those who will hold the reins of leadership. This political participation is a concrete manifestation of the exercise of legitimate political power by the people ([Budiardjo, 2008](#)).

One of the main requirements for realizing democratic regional head elections (Pilkada) is active public involvement in politics. Public participation in Pilkada plays a crucial role, as Pilkada produces regional leaders, and its success reflects the quality of democracy ([Syafuruddin & Hasanah, 2022](#)). This is understandable considering that in the regional elections, the level of participation of the people who attend the polling stations to elect the candidate pairs for regional head and deputy head has a great influence in determining whether the regional elections are completed in one round or must proceed to a second round ([Lumasuge et al., 2023](#)). The implementation of these regional elections should be open to all elements of society, including people with disabilities, who face limitations in participating in elections, whether physical, social, or psychological. People with disabilities have equal rights and opportunities to participate in the elections, just like other citizens. They have the right to elect their desired representatives and leaders, both through general elections and regional elections ([Maramis et al., 2022](#)).

The legal basis guaranteeing political rights for persons with disabilities is regulated in Article 13 of Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities. Persons with disabilities have the same political rights as other citizens. They are individuals with limitations in thinking, psychological abilities, bodily functions, and sensory systems. In interacting with their environment and society, persons with disabilities often face various obstacles that hinder their full and active participation in social life, including the political process ([Azzahra, 2020](#)).

In this study, the researcher focused on people with hearing impairments. These individuals are a group of people who experience hearing impairments, which can lead to communication difficulties, loss of access to information, and social marginalization ([Sarah Agusti, 2023](#)). Deaf people use sign language to communicate ([Sugianto & Samopa, 2015](#)). People with hearing impairments are often equated with weak or helpless individuals, so they are considered not to need access to education, work, or even to be involved in political activities ([Safitri & Ratnasari,](#)

[2022](#)).

Table 1. Deaf people with Disabilities Registered as Permanent Voters List

Subdistrict	TPS	Disability Information					
		Physical Disability	Intellectual Disability	Mental Disability	Speech impairment	Deaf Disability	Blind Disability
Cihideung	97	61	15	35	44	10	26
Cipedes	104	88	17	39	55	10	26
Tawang	84	79	21	31	37	19	41
Indihiang	80	68	15	36	40	13	25
Kawalu	141	115	33	61	87	29	33
Cibereum	96	62	21	21	36	3	27
Tamansari	107	75	20	27	78	17	37
Mangkubumi	132	91	14	40	65	17	40
Bungursari	83	51	16	30	53	11	30
Purbaratu	61	54	11	8	28	4	14
Total		744	183	328	523	133	299

Source: [\(KPU Kota Tasikmalaya, 2024\)](#)

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 article 9 emphasizes that the government must take appropriate steps to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities, so that they get equality in the environment, transportation, information, and communication, as well as access to available public facilities and services. The urgency of this research is reinforced by data from the General Election Commission (KPU) of Tasikmalaya City which noted that deaf people with disabilities were registered as permanent voters list (DPT) in the 2024 Pilkada. This number shows that deaf people with disabilities are an important part of the disabled voter group who should receive equal attention and access to information with other communities. The KPU of Tasikmalaya City has made efforts to conduct socialization and voter education in ensuring that the political rights of persons with disabilities are not only legally recognized, but also facilitated technically and operationally during the regional head elections [\(Kristian, 2024\)](#).

However, based on pre-research with one of the organizations participating in the socialization and voter education conducted by the Tasikmalaya City General Elections Commission (KPU), namely the Indonesian Deaf Welfare Movement (Gerkatin) of Tasikmalaya City, obstacles were found in understanding information due to the incompatibility of the sign language system used between interpreters from the KPU and Gerkatin members. This obstacle indicates that the involvement of disability groups in the Pilkada is still formalistic, not touching the need for substantial communication accessibility. This is in line with research compiled by research compiled by [Dedi & Soedarmo \(2020\)](#) entitled: Political Participation of Disabled Voters in Ciamis Regency in the 2019 Simultaneous Elections. This study explains that the low political participation of people with disabilities is caused by low access to political education and limited supporting facilities and infrastructure, the lack of TPS officers who understand the needs of people with disabilities, and the absence of socialization for people with disabilities. Referring to the above description, researchers need to further examine "Political Participation of Deaf People

with Disabilities: A Case Study of Gerkatina Tasikmalaya City in the 2024 Regional Elections." The purpose of this study is to identify and understand the various forms of political involvement of Gerkatina Tasikmalaya City members in the 2024 Regional Elections. This study uses the concept of political participation by [Elfriza \(2012\)](#) with indicators of voting, Political Discussion, Campaign Activities, Forming and Joining Interest Groups, Individual Communication with Political and Administrative Officials and Level of Political Participation of Deaf People with Disabilities.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative research method, which is used to obtain extensive data and in-depth information about the issue or problem to be solved. This research uses a descriptive case study approach, according to Creswell in [Sugiyono \(2023\)](#). A case study is a type of qualitative research, where the researcher conducts an intensive study of a program, event, process, or activity involving a particular individual or group. According to [Arikunto \(2007\)](#), a data source in research is a subject from which researchers can obtain data. This research uses primary data derived from interviews collected directly by researchers or parties requiring data through field collection techniques. Secondary data is obtained from previous research or other sources such as books, journals, and other references related to the research topic. The research targets members of Gerkatina Tasikmalaya City, for research subjects using a purposive sampling technique. This technique is to determine informants based on certain considerations because they are considered to be the most knowledgeable about the problem being studied.

Data collection in this study was conducted through interviews and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain in-depth information from informants regarding their experiences, perceptions, and political participation in the 2024 regional elections. Meanwhile, documentation was used to obtain supporting data relevant to this study. The collected data was then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model in [Sugiyono \(2023\)](#). Qualitative data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously, until all the data obtained reached saturation point and no longer found any new information. In the data analysis process, researchers went through several important stages, namely information collection, filtering or data reduction, presentation of results, and the process of drawing conclusions. The analysis was carried out continuously and interactively until the data was deemed adequate and able to answer the focus of the research problem. To maintain data validity, this study applied triangulation techniques, which include source triangulation and technical triangulation. Technical triangulation of sources was carried out by comparing observation results with interview results, adjusting general statements with individual opinions, and matching them with data from relevant documents. Meanwhile, technical triangulation was used to test the validity of information from a single source using various different approaches or methods.

Results and Discussion

Political Participation

Ramlan Surbakti explains that political participation is a form of active involvement of citizens in the decision-making process that concerns and affects their lives ([Surbakti, 1992](#)). This involvement can be realized through various activities such as voting during general elections or regional elections, attending political meetings, communicating or lobbying with public officials or people's representatives, and joining political parties or social movements that take real action to encourage changes in government policy ([Budiardjo, 2008](#)). Public political participation in

regional elections is one of their responsibilities in national and state life ([Halim & Lalongan, 2016](#)). This public involvement demonstrates their awareness and willingness to exercise their political rights in determining the direction of government policy. Citizen involvement in the political process does not necessarily mean that citizens support the decisions or policies determined by their leaders. This involvement in political participation is a way for citizens to express their views, criticisms, or alternatives to policies that are currently or will be implemented ([Josep, 2023](#)). In this case, political participation functions as a social control on power and as a mechanism to strengthen public accountability.

Political participation should involve all levels of society, including deaf and deaf people. Guarantees of political rights for people with disabilities are stipulated in Article 13 of Constitution Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities. This article affirms that people with disabilities have equal political rights with other citizens. The political participation of Gerkatina members in Tasikmalaya City in the 2024 regional elections demonstrates the diversity of their forms of participation. Gabriel Almond explains two forms of political participation: conventional and non-conventional. In the 2024 regional elections, Gerkatina members' political participation reflects conventional political participation. This form of involvement includes activities such as exercising their right to vote, engaging in discussions on political issues, participating in campaign activities, becoming part of interest groups, and communicating directly with public officials or government officials ([Elfriza, 2012](#)).

The role of the Tasikmalaya City Gerkatina organization for its members in the 2024 regional elections is to bridge information originating from the election organizers regarding the implementation of the 2024 Regional Elections, including information related to the socialization and voter education held by the Tasikmalaya City KPU. Tasikmalaya City Gerkatina also plays a role in encouraging the political participation of its members, to participate in using their voting rights in the 2024 regional elections, invitations to participate in voting are often informed in Whatsapp groups and invitations when there are gatherings. This study will explain in depth the forms of political participation of Tasikmalaya City Gerkatina members in the 2024 Regional Elections, as follows;

a) Voting

Voting is a form of conventional participation according to Gabriel Almond, this voting is the most frequent form of political participation carried out by citizens in a democratic system. This voting is a common activity carried out when determining general elections or regional head elections. This voting has an impact on the continuity of leadership in a region in the future. Based on the results of the study, it shows that deaf people with disabilities who are members of Gerkatina Tasikmalaya City have already voted in the 2024 regional elections, however, their reasons or motivations for voting in the 2024 regional elections vary. Some exercise their right to vote because of their political awareness as citizens, with the hope that the elected leader will pay attention to the needs of people with disabilities. On the other hand, some informants vote due to family encouragement without understanding the vision and mission of the candidate pairs.

This difference indicates variation in the quality of participation. Informants with higher education, such as Nadira and Mr. Razu, demonstrated higher political awareness, actively sought information, and considered candidates' visions and missions when making their choice.

In contrast, informants with lower education tended to be passive and influenced by their immediate environment. This finding is supported by research showing that education level is positively correlated with political awareness and participation ([Ligua et al., 2022](#)). Therefore, even though deaf people have been involved in voting, efforts are still needed to increase political awareness so that their participation becomes more meaningful and independent ([Mustika & Sari, 2016](#)).

b) Political Discussion

Political discussions are activities where people exchange opinions, information, or views on emerging political issues, government policies, and the governance process. These discussions are a way to build public political awareness, broaden public knowledge of current political issues, and encourage more active public participation in political activities. Research shows that some members of the Tasikmalaya City Gerkatina have engaged in political discussions, particularly with their deaf peers. They discuss candidate pairs, their track records, and their concerns for people with disabilities. These discussions not only aim to share information but also serve as a basis for decision-making when voting.

However, these discussions remain limited to internal settings, such as among deaf friends and family. The main obstacle is limited access to inclusive discussion spaces, including the absence of sign language interpreters at political events held by political parties or public institutions. This makes political discussion spaces among deaf people less than fully inclusive. Some Gerkatina members still never participate in political discussions because they feel they don't fully understand political issues. The lack of political education from political parties and the limited availability of disability-friendly information are the main causes of this low level of political literacy. Political discussions held by first-time voters who are members of Gerkatina South Jakarta are still limited to general discussions and issues surrounding the fulfillment of disability rights which are felt to be less than optimal ([Pratiwi & Susanti, 2020](#)). The discussions they held took place among deaf friends or peers. In this study, political discussions were not individual but rather collaborative discussions with the South Jakarta Gerkatina organization. This indicates a gap in political understanding among Gerkatina members in Tasikmalaya City. On the one hand, some Gerkatina members were already actively discussing and building political awareness, but there were also some Gerkatina members who remained passive due to limited information, access, and political understanding. This situation indicates that political discussion as a form of participation has not been enjoyed equally by all Gerkatina members in Tasikmalaya City.

c) Campaign Activities

Participation aims to influence the public's political preferences. Campaign activities are part of political communication, enabling the public to support or express their choice for a particular candidate or political party. Campaigns serve as a medium for regional head candidates or political parties to introduce their visions, missions, and work programs to the wider public, as well as to gain public support. The study found that the involvement of deaf people with disabilities, members of Gerkatina Tasikmalaya City, in campaign activities in Tasikmalaya City was still very limited. Some informants attended the campaign solely due to encouragement from their families, not out of political awareness. Meanwhile, others chose not to participate because they considered the candidate pairs to be inattentive to disability issues in their campaigns.

Campaign activities in the 2024 regional elections have not been fully inclusive. Lack of accessibility, particularly the absence of sign language interpreters (JBI) and disability-friendly campaign media, makes it difficult for deaf participants to understand campaign materials. As a result, their participation is more symbolic and a mere formality. Important information such as the visions and missions and work programs of candidate pairs is not equally accessible. The results of the study indicate that political parties have not shown real concern in reaching out to the Gerkatin organization in Tasikmalaya City during the 2024 regional election campaign period. This finding differs from other research on the Political Participation of First-Time Voters and Gerkatin Members in South Jakarta in the 2017 regional elections. This study showed that candidate pairs participating in the 2017 regional elections and political parties have paid attention to accessibility for deaf people ([Pratiwi & Susanti, 2020](#)).

These findings indicate that political parties in Tasikmalaya City still position deaf people as a marginalized group in their campaign processes. These campaign activities are a form of conventional participation, which should influence individuals or groups to participate in their political activities. However, based on the research results, these campaign activities do not work as they should because the deaf people who attend are only symbolic.

d) Forming and Joining Interest Groups

This participation is a form of political participation, this interest group is formed by the community to fight for their interests and try to influence public policy. The deaf people who joined Gerkatin Tasikmalaya City show that political participation does not have to be formal through direct activities with the state or political institutions. Gerkatin is included in the associational interest group, where this interest group is formed to represent the interests of a specific group that aims to fight for the interests of its members. The results of the study show that the Gerkatin Tasikmalaya City organization becomes a collective space for its members to provide moral and social support to each other. The existence of Gerkatin provides a sense of security for deaf people to express themselves, increase self-confidence, and strengthen self-identity through Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) as their mother tongue.

These findings align with research showing that Gerkatin functions as a social space that provides emotional comfort and solidarity support among deaf people. More than just an internal community, Gerkatin has played a role in championing the accessibility of disability-friendly political information. However, Gerkatin's effectiveness as an interest group will be optimal if supported by an expanded external social network ([Jannati, 2019](#)). Currently, Gerkatin Tasikmalaya City has established a partnership with the Metamorfoza Community, a community that focuses on disability issues, including the deaf. By building a strategic and broader social network, Geraktin Tasikmalaya City can enhance Gerkatin's organizational capacity to optimally advocate for the political rights of deaf people. Collaboration with organizations, academics, and regional election organizers can encourage the creation of more inclusive policies for deaf people.

e) Individual Communication with Political and Administrative Officials

Communication is a form of conventional political participation, where individual communication with political and administrative officials occurs when citizens convey their aspirations, requests, or complaints to political and administrative officials with the aim of

influencing their decisions or policies. Research shows that members of the Tasikmalaya City Gerkatina (Gerkatina) are not yet confident in conveying their aspirations or complaints directly to the government. They prefer to convey them through the Gerkatina organization because they feel they lack the authority and lack confidence due to their limitations.

According to Gabriel Almond, direct communication with public officials is an important form of conventional political participation in influencing policy. However, this form of participation has not been optimally utilized by Gerkatina members. Gerkatina Tasikmalaya City, as an organization, has played a mediating role by establishing communication with election organizers, such as the Tasikmalaya City General Elections Commission (KPU), to ensure inclusive voter education and outreach. This is in line with findings that demonstrate the role of disability organizations as a channel for collective aspirations. However, relying on organizations is not enough to strengthen the political position of deaf individuals. Therefore, efforts are important to increase self-confidence and awareness of individual political rights, as well as create disability-friendly public communication spaces, for example by providing sign language interpreters and inclusive forums. If these are met, the political participation of deaf individuals can develop more actively and independently ([Julaeha et al., 2022](#)).

f) Level of Political Participation of Deaf People with Disabilities who are Members of Gerkatina Tasikmalaya City.

The level of political participation of deaf people in the 2024 regional elections was analyzed using the Roth and Wilson political participation pyramid in ([Budiardjo, 2008](#)) which divides participation into four levels: apolitical, observer, participant, and activist. The research results show that the majority of Gerkatina members in Tasikmalaya City are at the observer level, exercising their right to vote but lacking a deep understanding of the political process, the visions and missions, or the work programs of the candidate pairs. Their participation is generally driven by family, not by their own political awareness.

Some other members have reached the participant level, marked by their involvement in internal political discussions within the organization, although these discussions have not yet progressed to broader forums. Meanwhile, the advocacy conducted by the chairman of Gerkatina Kota Tasikmalaya for the 2019–2024 period to the Tasikmalaya City General Elections Commission (KPU) places him at the activist level, as he has actively sought to implement inclusive voter outreach for his members, although the results have not yet been realized due to limitations on the KPU's part.

Overall, the majority of members have yet to reach a level of active political participation due to a lack of access to information and communication, as well as minimal political involvement from political parties or the government. Consistent with findings *temuan* ([Muksin et al., 2024](#)), this situation demonstrates the dominance of observer positions among deaf people in the election context. Therefore, greater involvement from political actors and election organizers is needed to encourage the transformation from observers to participants, even activists, for the sake of a more inclusive democracy.

Conclusion

Members of the Gerkatina (City of Tasikmalaya's Youth Movement) in the 2024 regional elections have participated in conventional political activities. According to Gabriel Almond, conventional

political participation includes voting, political discussions, campaign activities, joining interest groups like Gerkatina, and indirect communication with political officials through organizations. According to Roth and Wilson's pyramid of political participation, members of the Gerkatina City of Tasikmalaya are at the observer level. These members are already present in the political process, but their involvement is still very limited and has not yet developed into participation capable of directly influencing policy direction or political decisions.

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