

**PUBLIC SERVICE, PARTICIPATION, AND ELECTION
GOVERNANCE:
The Bali Election Commission's Strategy to Increase Voter Turnout in the
2024 Bali Regional Elections**

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ABSTRACT

This research examines how the quality of public service during the 2024 Bali Regional Head Election shaped officials' capacity to meet citizens' needs, with particular attention to political participation. Bali Provincial KPU data show voter turnout falling from 77.22% in 2018 to 71.92% in 2024 across six districts, with a pronounced rural-urban gap: Gianyar and Tabanan lagged behind Denpasar and Buleleng. Using a qualitative descriptive-analytical design, the study draws on KPU reports, in-depth interviews with key informants, and Scopus-indexed literature on public service quality and electoral governance. Findings point to four determinants of service quality: institutional capacity, the socio-cultural context of indigenous communities, the digital divide and literacy, and the strength of local stakeholder support. Logistical delays and uneven outreach further depressed turnout. Theoretically, the study contributes a context-sensitive account of electoral public service quality in provincial Indonesia, integrating the SERVQUAL framework (Parasuraman et al., 1988), Mozaffar and Schedler's (2002) three-function model of electoral governance, and the socio-cultural capital embedded in Bali's traditional community structures, a resource largely overlooked in the global literature on electoral management bodies. The study concludes that KPU services require stronger logistical coordination, more transparent information, and deeper institutional collaboration to deliver fairer, more inclusive, and digitally adaptive elections.

Keywords: public services, voter participation, *electoral governance*, Bali KPU, democratic legitimacy

INTRODUCTION

The regional head elections (Pilkada) are the most critical democratic element in the Indonesian political system, as they are the key entry point for citizens to exercise their political rights directly. Through this electoral process, the electorate can evaluate whether state institutions effectively embody democratic tenets (Appiah et al., 2025), specifically fairness, transparency, accountability, and public participation. In this context, the Election

Commission (KPU) becomes in a strategic position, not only as an administrative institution but also as a provider of public services for democracy (Aasoglenang et al., 2025). The KPU is not only tasked with the technical administration of elections, but also with fulfilling its normative duties to guarantee that citizens can vote freely, easily, and safely, and with dignity, as regulated in Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services and Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Election.

Nevertheless, the dynamics of the 2024 Bali Regional Election continue to attract serious attention from scientists. According to official data from the Bali Provincial KPU, voter turnout in the 2024 regional elections is 71.92% (lower than the second-round participation in the 2018 regional elections), which totalled 77.22%. This drop is not simply a statistical aberration but mirrors failures in the public service aspect of elections, which directly compromise a constitutional right to participate. One of the most obvious signs of democratic legitimacy, although not the only one (Virtanen et al., 2025), is voter turnout, and a decrease in participation not only signals citizens' apathy towards politics but can also indicate an erosion of confidence in the organization of elections.

Ramasamy (2020) identified several fundamental issues in KPU's provision of public services. First, the distribution of election logistics, especially voting invitation forms, is uneven in some regions. That sheds light on a particularly frail dimension of public service reliability: the extent to which service providers deliver services promptly and accurately. Second, it is also getting because KPU's socialization has not been well optimized for all parts of society. The respondents were also demographically representative of a large segment of the general population, comprising young people and first-time voters, who rank lowest in understanding how political participation works and its potential impact. This phenomenon is an expression of difficulties in the responsive and empathetic dimensions of public service: public institutions have not understood and tuned in to the communicative needs of their target groups. Finally, the gap between urban and rural areas in access to information also exposes a deep problem of information equity. Supportive local social structures, such as traditional leaders, contribute to higher participation rates in rural communities, whereas more heterogeneous urban areas face challenges in disseminating and distributing information.

This phenomenon shows that public services in the context of elections are not merely administrative matters but also issues of electoral governance. The concept of electoral governance, introduced by Mozaffar and Schedler in 2002, emphasizes that the success of elections depends on three main functions: rule-making, rule-application, and rule-adjudication (Chang & Lee, 2025). In the context of Bali, weaknesses in the implementation of rules governing election logistics and socialization can affect the other two dimensions: perceptions of fairness and the legitimacy of election results. Thus, this study is important to assess the extent to which the Bali KPU has carried out its rule-application function within the framework of responsive and inclusive public services. Various previous studies have highlighted the link between the quality of public services and public trust in state institutions.

In addition to institutional challenges, technological and digitalization considerations are important for public elections. The digital transformation of the government's e-government system, as studied by Ward & Monaghan (2025), indeed opens opportunities to improve the effectiveness of public services. Nevertheless, the digital gap, insufficient community digital capacity or literacy, and information safety problems limit some of SPBE's advantages, particularly in locations with high social and economic disparity, just as in Bali. Therefore, the success of public services in elections is not determined exclusively by technical preparedness; it also depends on institutional capacity to manage public communication inclusively and on data.

Based on the findings of the 2024 Bali Regional Election report and our analysis in literature reviews, it is probable that several dimensions define the quality of public services, which include complex dimensions in implementing elections, such as logistical reliability, socialization effectiveness, information transparency, institutional responsiveness, empathy towards vulnerable groups, and technology accessibility. A shortfall in any dimension directly reduces turnout and also the legitimacy of election results. Consequently, quality improvement of public service in electoral governance is an indispensable prerequisite for enhancing the foundation of public trust and the sustainability of local democracy in Indonesia.

Consequently, it raises a few research questions: *First*, how does the quality of public services provided by the Bali KPU affect voter participation in the 2024 local elections, as shown by spatial variation in voter turnout? *Second*, what internal institutional and external sociocultural factors determine the quality of electoral public services in Bali? *Third*, what is the extent of the relationship between the quality of electoral public services and democratic legitimacy at the local level? *Fourth*, how do these findings influence electoral governance reform in Indonesia?

This study analyzed in depth the role of the KPU Bali Province, as well as its efforts to provide and enhance services during the implementation of the 2024 regional election, to fulfil citizens' constitutional rights to political participation and public information. Additionally, this study seeks to identify factors affecting the quality of public services in elections, measure the association between service quality and voter turnout, and develop strategic policy recommendations to enhance transparent, inclusive, and citizen-oriented election governance. By this approach, this study is expected to enrich further the literature regarding public services in the domain of governance as well as practically improve the electoral administration system of Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Public Service

Public service is an essential part of contemporary government systems because it is the most tangible and functional manifestation of how the state meets citizens' rights and needs. Public service is not merely administrative; rather, Baser & Tan (2023) emphasize that it is a tool for creating public value, in which the state has a duty to deliver genuine social

returns to the community. Within the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm, public services are guided by effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, and citizen satisfaction (citizen-centered governance), in stark contrast to studies of inflexible bureaucracy (Zhong et al., 2025). So public services are conceived here as a complex system of exchange between the state and citizens, in which justice, transparency, and the moral obligation of administrators are guiding principles.

According to Kotze (2023), good public governance and low levels of corruption are positively associated with improvements in citizens' perceptions of government fairness, which in turn enhance the quality of service delivery. Czuba (2024) also discussed Performance Evaluation in Public Information Services at the General Election Commission of Indonesia and found that KPU public information services are only relatively effective, where empathy and accessibility limitations remain prominent in several regions, particularly those with low political literacy. Research by Qin et al. (2025), on the other hand, on Public Information Transparency: An Important Precondition for Informed Political Participation in Developing Democracies.

Like many administrative public services, elections will carry a few features: they are delivered through state institutions, feminist ideals guide them, and they are supposed to be universally available and to involve citizen–state interactions, which can be assessed in terms of quality, equity, and responsiveness (Schedler, 2002). However, elections are also *sui generis*: participation is a constitutional right, not a consumer choice; the state retains the legal monopoly over legitimate election management; and election results affect the whole polity, not just individual service users (Birch, 2011). Moreover, while service quality is important for the legitimacy of elections, there is also an accountability dimension that matters, the integrity of the process itself, which is no more relevant than the standard public service framework.

In line with Norris (2014) and the literature on electoral integrity, we contend that elections constitute a mixed institutional category encompassing regulatory, democratic, and service-delivery functions. In this framing and acknowledging that this dimension is not exhaustive of what elections mean for democracy, the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman et al., 1988) still has relevant insights to offer as a diagnostic tool on electoral administration, at least in terms of the system of access, information, and logistics which the KPU delivers.

In Indonesia, this principle is formalized through Law No. 25 of 2009 on Public Services, which affirms that public services are a constitutional right of citizens and an obligation of the state to fulfil them equitably and fairly, to a high standard of quality (Trihatmoko & Susilo, 2024). In this context, the quality of public services serves as a benchmark for the government's effectiveness in ensuring citizens' social welfare and political rights. The SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) is one of the most widely used frameworks for measuring the quality of public services. The five core dimensions assessed in this model include: tangibility (condition of physical facilities), reliability (dependability and precision of service), responsiveness (speed

and attentiveness of officers), assurance (competence, respect, and trustworthiness by institutions), and empathy (personalized attention to user needs) Kou & Yasin, 2024.

Many previous studies indicate that, although the SERVQUAL dimensions are primarily associated with the private sector, they are also highly appropriate in the public sector. It is posited by Geusan Akbar & Rulandari (2021) that the quality of public services in local governments in Indonesia has quite a significant influence on public satisfaction and trust in public institutions. On the other side, a study from Salomo & Rahmayanti (2023) provides evidence that better public governance and low corruption will increase the quality of service satisfaction as well as increase trust in government. Alon-Barkat et al. reported similar findings (trained on data till 2023 Oct) (2025) define that information transparency and institutional responsiveness are key determinants of citizen trust in developing countries.

For KPU, the five dimensions of SERVQUAL are more than just a set of technical indicators; they can also be viewed as moral and political reflections in the context of public institutions. His Highness says that poor service quality not only erodes citizens' satisfaction but also undermines democracy, because elections are a political public service. So, when talking about public services in the context of elections, things need to be evaluated chiefly on a logistical reliability (is it feasible?), social effectiveness (does it create positive propaganda that gets out there?), transparency and empathy (the information without empathy is of no use, so using them only when needed), and reasonable access to information. This method provides a more holistic glimpse of how the quality of public services relates to public trust and participation in electoral democracy in Indonesia.

Electoral Governance and the Role of the KPU

Electoral governance is an important area of study concerned with how elections are conducted credibly, transparently, and inclusively. Asante et al. Electoral governance refers to the entire institutional process comprising three functions: rulemaking, rule application, and rule adjudication (Gizelis et al., 2024). These three dimensions determine the extent to which elections are held in accordance with democratic and just principles. If one of these elements fails, such as the enforcement of the rules or the readiness of organizers, the credibility and legitimacy of elections may be undermined (Tokareva et al., 2024).

Electoral governance developed considerably in line with the post-1998 political reforms in Indonesia. This marked a historical milestone because it was the first step toward creating an independent agency (the KPU) to conduct and manage elections, a major component of electoral democracy. The KPU is a state institution that is permanent and independent, with the duty to conduct direct, public, free, and confidential secret ballots in an honest and fair election. This institutional imperative means that the KPU is not only responsible for the technical implementation of elections but also for serving as a custodian of democracy and a guardian of political virtue and legitimacy. The KPU can be seen not only as an administrative institution but also, in the broader sense of public administration, as a democratic public service provider (Kim, 2023) or as a political sphere-specific public service.

Consequently, the KPU serves as a facilitator for every eligible citizen to exercise their right to vote in an orderly manner through services that ensure accessibility, clarity of information, and procedural fairness. It is in line with the mandate of Law Number 7 Year 2017 concerning General Elections and Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services, which emphasize participatory, transparent, and accountable service at every stage of the election. International studies have also shown that effective election administration is heavily dependent on the ability of the organizing institutions to deliver efficient public services. The way in which independent, professional, and responsive EMBs translate directly into enhanced public confidence in election outcomes is illustrated by Baniamin (2021). Meanwhile, Virtanen et al. They highlight how personal interactions with the quality of what organizing institutions deliver influence public perceptions of electoral fairness more than election results do (2025).

Maulana et al. (2022) point out that the quality of electoral governance at the local level is frequently rooted in structural determinants and behavior patterns of political actors. Weak logistical capacity and uneven information dissemination, combined with elite capture of the democratic process, contribute to lower-quality citizen political engagement in many regions. This condition reflects that the KPU's success in carrying out its mandate requires not only regulations but also effective implementation and communication with voters as members of the public. Also, KPU's role as a political public service institution can be viewed through the lens of governance and service delivery.

This paradigm demands that public institutions perform more than administrative functions and engender public trust and participation through transparent, responsive, and inclusive public services (Kim et al., 2022). Therefore, in describing electoral governance quality, the performance of public services during elections is a critical factor. On a practical level, the KPU has two main duties: first, to provide certainty regarding procedural aspects by executing its obligations in accordance with the regulations; and second, to address substantive aspects, in which elections serve as a vehicle for genuine political participation. The issue of delays in the logistics distribution chain, coupled with youth voter illiteracy and information gaps between urban and rural areas, as witnessed at the 2024 Bali regional elections, only hints at weaknesses within KPU in consolidating its institutional capacity for public services, especially communication, education, and distribution management.

The People's Right to Political Participation and Public Information

The right to participate in political life is one of the fundamental human rights guaranteed in various national and international legal instruments. Article 28E paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia affirms that every citizen has the right to participate in government, either directly or through their elected representatives. This principle is also emphasized in Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees every citizen the right to participate in free and periodic elections. Thus, political participation is not merely the act of voting in elections, but also the actualization of citizens' constitutionally enshrined civil rights.

In the context of elections, citizens' right to political participation would be meaningless without fair access to public information. Information is a key prerequisite for informed participation, which is political participation grounded in understanding, awareness, and knowledge of the political process and its consequences. This is in line with Law Number 14 of 2008 concerning Public Information Disclosure, which affirms that every citizen has the right to obtain accurate, timely, and correct information as a means of transparency in government administration. In the context of elections, information disclosure strengthens public trust in the integrity of the organizing institutions and helps prevent information distortion that can lead to political apathy.

Previous studies have shown a close relationship between public information disclosure and the level of political participation among the public. A study by Masters-Awatere et al. (2025) found that public information transparency increases perceptions of procedural justice and strengthens citizens' trust in the government. In the context of electoral democracy, Boomgaarden et al. (2025) explain that meaningful political participation can only be realized when citizens have access to credible political information relevant to their needs. This is reinforced by Power et al. (2024), who found that information disclosure and open public communication are key factors in encouraging civic engagement and social trust in political institutions in developing countries.

In the Indonesian context, the right to public information during election implementation is highly relevant. The KPU (Election Commission), as the implementer and organizer of elections, has an obligation to present information on stages, participants, permanent voter lists, and election results in a clear, transparent, and easily accessible manner. Trained on data until October 2023, this transparency is not merely administrative but ethical and educational; it can be imagined as a sort of political public service. Indeed, there is extensive evidence of persisting disparities in access to and distribution of political information across regions and socio-economic groups. However, James and Garnett (2025) argue that both political illiteracy and digital disadvantage are key barriers to participatory increases in youth voter turnout.

It has been argued that the lack of information creates an attitude-behaviour gap in political participation, whereby people are not translating their political awareness into behaviour. This phenomenon is typically associated with distrust in electoral institutions or low levels of efficacy of political public services (Aasoglenang et al., 2025). For instance, according to a regional election evaluation report in August 2024, voter turnout was low due to limited information and low awareness, with rural areas in Bali showing lower turnout than urban areas. The rural communities, such as those in Gianyar and Tabanan, are far more likely to participate than those in Denpasar or Buleleng because of fresh and intensive social networks establishing the need for participation, local leaders strongly support a sense that everybody should make their mark on the vote but this is not available when a community is isolated, like they often are in urban locations as civic services such details about stages of how the election will proceed arrive slow.

Then, some informants in Denpasar do prove clearly aware of the importance of elections and their constitutional right to vote (attitude), but they did not go to polling stations because: (1) He or she was never received the C6 voting invite form; (2) Did not know where exactly his or her polling stations located, as a result of changing district line within Permanent Election List (DPT); and (3) Consider each election results had been contrived before it takes place. 1995), this cohort and the inter-generational deficit in political efficacy that they refer to in their analysis. The cases of the political intent-behaviour gap, generated by service delivery failures, thus provide a stronger evidentiary basis for our theoretical claims.

Quality of Public Services in the Context of Elections

Public services during elections are among the biggest indicators of democratic governance. Elections are a political process of electing leaders, but elections are also a type of political public service, in practice, citizens' rights. Thus, good elections are those that are not just free of fraud but also capable of delivering the civil service experience to everyone in a transparent, efficient, and inclusive way. As emphasized by Qin et al. In fact, the legitimacy of democracy as we know it in modern societies relies solely on how well these electoral-organizing institutions deliver on their public-service mandate (2025). The nature of election services in terms of quality and delivery is a multidimensional public service. It first focuses on reliability, which refers to how organizers provide services consistently, on time, and in line with procedures, such as the distribution of election logistics, the maintenance of permanent voter lists, and vote processing.

Election services with low reliability are also evident in delays in distributing voting invitation forms (C6) and/or discrepancies in the voter list data, for example, people appearing to have died before or after leakages such as Def-I leaks or being deleted from official records. Second, the responsiveness dimension concerns whether the KPU responds quickly and appropriately to field issues (both administrative errors and problems arising from voter complaints). Thirdly, the assurance dimension comprises assurances from the organizing institution (i.e., regarding competence, integrity, and credibility) that directly contribute to trusting outcomes in voting. Fourth, empathy is attentive to the needs of specific populations, such as our first-time voters, citizens who are disabled, or living in remote communities. Fifth, Tangibility means there are sufficient physical facilities and infrastructure available (polling stations (TPS), election logistics, public information facilities, etc.). The five dimensions of service quality in the SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), have been among the most widely applied models in public services across numerous settings, including government (Wardle & Scales, 2025).

In the case of elections, link the nature of public services to transparency and inclusiveness of information. Findings from the Baser & Tan (2023) study on civic engagement and public trust in state institutions indicate that transparency and openness of public information in government institutions are substantially and positively associated with

both civic engagement and trust in publicly owned corporations. Ward & Monaghan (2025) confirm this recent research, noting that electoral fairness is not only a measure of results but also depends on the quality of service and experience with electoral institutions. This implies that failing electoral public services may destroy political confidence, even when this does not endanger the mechanical quality of election results.

Several studies in Indonesia also reveal that the quality of public services influences local democratic legitimacy. Salomo & Rahmayanti (2023) conclude that public governance institutionalized by local governments leads to better-quality service delivery and greater public trust in government institutions. This finding can be interpreted in the context of elections because KPU, as part of the state administration, is also required to uphold principles of good public governance and ensure fair access and transparency.

The performance of public services in elections needs to be understood not only diagnostically but also in terms of local socio-cultural conditions. Bali, a province with a culture and social structure based at the community level, needs public services that are contextual and community-based. As argued by Baniamin (2021), in developing countries, the legitimacy of public institutions is determined by their capacity to tailor service models to the characteristics of local communities. For example, the effectiveness of civil society organizations and stakeholders, specifically local traditional leaders (Asita), along with educational institutions, plays an important role in determining the strategy adopted by the Bali KPU to promote inclusive public services.

METHOD

With a qualitative approach, this research aims to understand how the quality of public service measures in the electoral governance of the Electoral System Introduction on regional elections 2024 vectors from Bali Province are signified by mutually reinforcing traits. The 2024 Bali Regional Elections (Pilkada Bali, 2024) were held on November 27, 2024, as part of the Indonesian concurrent local elections 2024. This research was conducted after the elections, using post-election assessment papers from KPU Province Bali, released in December 2024 and January 2025, as well as data from Bawaslu Bali.

This approach is selected because it can examine the processes, contexts, and social meanings behind electoral practices rather than just quantifying variables. This is because the working paradigm is constructivist, viewing the nature and impropriety of public services as functionaries, based on institutional logics, vis-à-vis the lived experiences of citizens themselves as service recipients within the mechanism of the polity. The research was conducted in Bali Province, specifically regarding the 2024 Regional Elections conducted by the Bali Provincial KPU. This location selection was based on empirical findings that explain the decline in voter turnout from 77.22% in the August 2018 regional elections to 71.92% in the April 2024 regional elections, as well as problems with distribution, socialization, and public information disclosure logistics. These circumstances establish Bali as a perfect setting for studying public services and the climate of political participation within a community under electoral governance.

Purposive sampling was used to select the four regencies (Gianyar, Tabanan, Denpasar, and Buleleng) based on their analytical findings. Gianyar and Tabanan are also largely undiversified regencies with highly concentrated banjar social structures, relatively high rural voter turnout, and very little urbanization. Denpasar and Buleleng are urban and semi-urban areas experiencing lower turnout, more severe logistical issues than in rural areas, and challenges to traditional community mobilization. This choice aligns with the logic of maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2002), maximising cases along a key dimension of relevance in this study: public service quality and voter participation. Based on your suggestion, we have added a paragraph of methodological justification in the Methods section.

The research data were primary and secondary. The qualitative data were obtained from in-depth interviews with KPU members, community leaders, first-time voters, and election observers to identify perceptions on the quality of public services during elections. This includes official documents, numerous reports, laws, and regulations on public services and elections, as well as some academic publications, both domestic and international. Data Collection Methods: Key informant in-depth interviews, document review, non-participatory observation, and literature review.

The data were analyzed using the interactive data analysis models of Lim (2024) and Miles & Huberman (1994), which include phases of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Thematic analysis was performed to identify patterns of meaning and primary themes of interest related to assurances, reliability, empathy, and responsiveness in public election services. This study employed source and method triangulation, along with member checking with key informants, to establish validity. The principle of trustworthiness (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was also used to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research results.

It's through and by this methodological design that this study attempts to generate a holistic picture of how the Bali Provincial KPU carries out its political public service functions, as well as the implications of the quality of these services to voter participation and local democracy legitimacy. It is also anticipated that the results will provide conceptual input for the development of electoral governance studies in Indonesia and, practically, will help formulate better recommendations to improve public services for fairer, more transparent, and more inclusive elections.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the 2024 Bali Regional Elections

The 2024 Bali Regional Elections: A Milestone for Indonesian Local Democratic Consolidation. While the elections were safe and conducive, official data from the Bali Province KPU revealed that voter turnout fell markedly from 77.22% in the 2018 Regional Elections to 71.92%. Such a decline cannot be explained solely by numbers; it reflects structural dynamics and the challenges facing electoral public services that reduce citizens' political interest. Spatial analysis using the latest version of Geoda, which shows spatial

relationships among all eight regencies/cities in Bali Province, shows that Gianyar and Tabanan Regencies had the highest participation rates (approximately 75.6% and 74.3%, respectively) each year. At the same time, Denpasar witnessed a poor turnout of only around (68.4%) and Buleleng had a below-average turnout of nearly (69.2%). This pattern shows the divide in participation between rural and urban areas: urban areas have high social cohesion, supported by traditional leaders. On the other hand, in cities where infrastructure is more readily available, there are challenges with logistics distribution, socialization, and the participation of young voters.

The Bali KPU has carried out most of the election stages in accordance with the administrative regulations. Although it is useful, the evaluation report identified major problems during implementation, including delays in distributing C6 forms (voting invitations) across several subdistricts, limited human resources at the PPK level, and unequal access to information for urban and rural voters. This dynamic is fundamental to the evaluation of quality in public service, offering broad access, because KPU is not only an administrative institution but also a provider of political services that must ensure equitable and broad access for all citizens. Similar problems were described in previous studies.

A study by Power et al. Logistics distribution strategies in election spread, for instance, were found in (2024) to be hindered by obstacles about the location of strategic logistics warehouses, coordination relations between election organizing units, and shortfalls in physical infrastructure in specific remote areas. This can cause a delay in the distribution of logistics to the poll stations. Similarly, other studies indicate that a lack of available transportation fleets, limited local human resources, and poor distribution planning are key sources of delay (Kotzé, 2023). These problems are similar to the situation in Bali, specifically logistical distribution challenges and disparities in service between urban and rural areas.

Baniamin (2021) examined South Asian democracies, particularly Bangladesh and Nepal, to show that public trust in institutions is hardly matched by improvements in governance performance, which may correlate with rural-urban areas, as many miss efforts to hold new institutions accountable. This result is significant for the Indonesian case in general, where institutional trust towards the KPU is not merely an apparent by-product of improvements in service quality. The study also revealed that electoral reforms can close the gap in participation between rural and urban areas, but that local factors such as distance, access to transport, and political socialization differ across regions. This research reiterates the contention that, as in Bali, the local setting strongly shapes how citizens access and deploy administrative support logistics. So that the existing phenomenon in Bali with low participation, logistical barriers, and gaps in information distribution through urban areas is a real example of the urgency of public election service, it is evident that the success of public services relates not merely to some mere administrative processes, but towards a better manifestation of reliability, timely action, and empathetic and fair access for all citizens.

The narrative of the decline in voter turnout is now multi-causal; the quality of public services is only one of many contributing factors, including candidate quality, campaign

dynamics, fatigue from simultaneous elections, urban youth apathy, and structural barriers such as out-migration or unregistered voters. This means that some weaknesses in service provision are causing participation to fall away. This classification follows Campbell et al.'s causal funnel of voting behaviour model (DIEHL, 1960), whereby a decision silo is a distal cause and is mediated through attitudinal variables. So, service quality influences participation, but in a probabilistic and contingent manner rather than in a deterministic one.

The Role of the KPU in Electoral Public Services

In the context of electoral governance, the General Elections Commission (KPU) has not only to implement each technical stage of elections but also to guarantee that citizens can participate politically, have access to voting rights, and obtain sufficient political information. In this light, the KPU serves as a provider of political public services, such as logistics, public communication, and the socialization of democracy. These components are directly linked to the dimensions of service quality, according to Virtanen et al. (2025), who focus on three additional dimensions: empathy, reliability, and responsiveness.

Despite the overarching efforts by Bali KPU to prepare for logistic readiness across the Province leading up to and during the 2024 Bali Regional Elections (official post-election evaluation report Bali 2024 prepared by KPU Provinsi Bali in December 2024, reports from Badan Pengawas Pemilu (Bawaslu) Bali monitoring and supervisory activity, print media reporting via news outlets such as Bali Post and Kompas covering logistic delays during election time), practical implementation results indicated substantial delays in the provision of C6 forms (voting invitations) in some urban subdistricts like Denpasar & Buleleng. This delay not only left voters bewildered by the absence of formal invites but also prompted caution, leading people to view the service as less than fully trustworthy. Wardle & Scales (2025) provided evidence of this, describing a shortage of transportation fleets, limited human resource capacity in the local health workforce, and poor distribution planning.

KPU has done enough to support voter outreach and education through face-to-face campaigns, social media outreach, and by building relationships with local communities and institutions. However, these strategies have had mixed results, with greater outreach in urban areas than in rural ones. These results are consistent with the findings of other research by Appiah et al. (2025), which demonstrated that geography, access to transportation, and connections among organizing units are obstacles to election delivery and engagement.

There are also limitations to the public information services provided by KPU Bali. While information on schedules, polling station locations, and voting procedures can still be shared via websites or social media, much of this is a one-way street, not interactive, and not always easily accessible for those in certain groups who are less familiar with digital technology, such as older voters and communities in remote areas. This situation exposes the limitations of the responsiveness and empathy dimensions, with requirements for institutions to provide not just information but also respond to public needs and questions.

Studies in Indonesia indicate that perceived transparency and accountability through e-governance also correlate positively with public trust and citizen participation (Trihatmoko

& Susilo, 2024). All in all, if the Bali KPU has proved its commitment to transparency and accountability, the non-uniformity of public services remains an impediment to inclusive and participatory elections. The imbalance between urban and rural areas, between active and inactive digital service users, and between young and old voters illustrates that the KPU must improve tangibles (physical or digital infrastructure), reliability, responsiveness, and empathy for political participation to flourish and for all citizens to believe that their General Election was fairly conducted.

Factors Affecting the Quality of Public Election Services in Bali

An analysis of KPU reports, follow-up interviews, and literature on the factors affecting public service quality in the 2024 Bali Regional Elections identifies several crucial internal and external factors. Internal Institutional Factors: *First*, these refer to human resource capacity, the readiness for Logistics and coordination between work units. However, there are still KPU staff at the sub-district level who lack the required technical and public communication skills, resulting in delays or inaccuracies in the preparation and distribution of logistics and the delivery of information. This is registered on the same line as Virtanen et al. Findings from both points support the fact that the effectiveness of public services in large cities is affected by institutional capacity and coordination between institutions.

Second, external socio-cultural factors do have a significant impact. The social structure in Bali, in the form of so-called traditional communities (banjar), provides social capital by enabling mobilization, trust, and community engagement, especially in rural regions such as Gianyar and Tabanan. On the other hand, weakened community and increased individualism in urban areas result in reduced effective civic participation and mobilization. The literature highlights that power can be built within local communities, and community leaders can be great connectors in efforts to elevate voter turnout. Research by Aasoglenang et al. Community-based volunteering increases socialization and participation (2025).

Third, technological factors and access to information are also decisive. The KPU's use of digital media and online communication platforms has expanded the reach of information, but the digital divide between urban and rural areas remains. Elderly voters and communities with low digital literacy tend to lag in obtaining electoral information. In line with this, a study by Wardle & Scales (2025) found that despite improvements in e-government infrastructure, limited internet access and poor network quality in remote areas remain major obstacles to public participation in digital public services.

Fourth, the support and participation of local stakeholders, such as traditional leaders, religious institutions, and civil society organizations, have proven significant in increasing public trust and enhancing the effectiveness of KPU's outreach. However, this collaboration has not been systematically integrated into KPU's institutional communication strategy. Other findings also show that the presence of trusted local figures or community

organizations can strengthen the resonance of election messages and expand the reach of socialization, especially in communities with strong social networks (Kortukov, 2025).

First, Putnam (1993) advanced the concept of social capital as the horizontal density of civic engagement, norms of reciprocity, and generalised trust, an ideal sense that explains why banjar-based communities in Gianyar and Tabanan tend to achieve high voter turnout. The banjar system operates exactly as this kind of associational infrastructure (Putnam, 1993): regular collective activity, common normative responsibility, and a face-to-face mobilization capability. *Second*, Ostrom (1990) establishes that in the case of community-based collective action institutions, banjar engage in a type of mobilization that state actors such as the KPU cannot simply replicate through top-down actions, because community institutions already have local knowledge, grievance mechanisms, and trust relations that state actors must develop from scratch.

Another Gianyar informant also explained that the klian banjar (village head) directly encourages his community members to go out and vote, including by providing information about where the voting booths are located. This is in marked contrast to an informant from Denpasar who has the institutional equivalent (headship of RT/RW) but lacks authority in the community and a regular network of interactions.

Taken together, these findings indicate that public election service quality is shaped not only by the bureaucratic and regulatory capacities of the KPU but also by the socio-technical ecology supporting the delivery of those services in society at large. Internal limitations, including technical, human resources, and coordination, combined with external barriers such as the digital divide, public literacy, and weak agency of local leaders or indigenous communities, will exacerbate inequalities in access to electoral services. As such, it is important to understand these factors so that public election services can be equitable and inclusive of all voters, regardless of whether they live in urban or rural areas.

The Relationship between the Quality of Public Services and Voter Participation

There is a direct connection between the quality of public services and voter mobilization, not only in how many voters go to the polls but also in public trust in the voting process. Results of this study indicate that areas with improving public service performance, such as Gianyar and Tabanan, tend to have higher public participation in elections. Not unrelated to the efficient transfer of logistics, the degree of socialisation and local engagement. Meanwhile, in regions such as Denpasar and Buleleng, which are primarily held back by logistical challenges, lower levels of political engagement can be traced to a wider variety of complex relationships stemming from struggles with information consistency. Perry & Wise (1990) define a public service motivation framework as we show in Baser & Tan (2023), citizens will adjust their motivation to help according to what they see in how the public institutions fulfil services that they mostly feel, and in other words, why do humans want to tighten their cooperation with one or more organizations? Low-quality or inequitable public services can help erode the perception that citizens are being heard equally, ultimately compromising civic engagement.

Research by Alon-Barkat et al. (2025), voter turnout in rural areas is at least twice that in urban areas when procedural fairness and quality of implementation are ensured, including logistical distribution, clear information, and institutional integrity. Another study, Qin et al. (2025), highlights the correlation between social networks, community interactions, and voter turnout among rural voters. Ward & Monaghan (2025) point out that social capital (norms, trust, and networks among citizens) is greater in rural areas and leads to more participation than in urban areas, where it is lower! In addition, infrastructure and access to information in rural areas are worse!

The same thing has happened in Bali. Proximity and the strength of social structures and community activity in a village work, with higher turnout linked to positive public service experiences (timely distribution logistics, effective socializing, public communication). In Denpasar and Buleleng, where, in addition to logistical delays, uneven information distribution and weak socialization among youth voters and certain demographic groups occurred, participation was lower. Besides the amount, the quality of public services also counts for perceptions of democratic legitimacy. Norris (2014) and Norris et al. (2015) were analysed, in that people believe their elections are free, fair, and procedural, which plays a major role in affecting voter turnout. Trust in the organizing institutions can be bolstered by local legitimacy when citizens feel adequately served by transparently communicated information, accessible and enabled voting rights, and effective, prompt, and non-discriminatory public services.

On the other hand, political apathy can arise from the slow, ineffective, or limited provision of services. This way, the tangible strengthening of citizen participation also becomes a necessary condition for maintaining the legitimacy of local democracy, so it can be concluded that one of the most important ways to improve public services for KPU is by implementing operational standards. Evidence from international- and national-level studies shows that public services that meet citizens' expectations for service reliability, transparency, and community involvement lead to higher levels of political participation and make democracy more widely felt as a common good. Then, poor delivery logistics is a form of support failure that results in temporary disengagement. If all those types of failures recur across election cycles, they risk undermining diffuse support to the point that only gradual operational changes can reverse them, turning political disengagement into an institutional problem (Van de Walle & Bouckaert, 2003).

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the quality of public services during the implementation of the 2024 Bali Regional Elections plays an important role in determining the level of community political participation and in shaping the legitimacy of local democracy. Although the regional elections generally ran smoothly and safely, the decline in voter participation from 77.22% in 2018 to 71.92% in 2024 indicates serious challenges in the General Elections Commission (KPU)'s provision of public services. As a public institution, the KPU not only functions as the technical organizer of elections but also as a provider of

public democratic services, with a moral and legal responsibility to guarantee citizens' rights to political participation and information.

The study's results show that the quality of public services provided by the Bali KPU still faces several obstacles regarding reliability, responsiveness, and empathy. Delays in the distribution of C6 forms, uneven dissemination of information, and information gaps between urban and rural areas indicate weak service reliability and responsiveness in delivering election-related public services. On the other hand, there are positive aspects to learn from, such as increased collaboration between the KPU and local communities, especially traditional villages, to strengthen political participation among rural communities. Areas such as Gianyar and Tabanan saw high participation due to the synergy among organizing institutions, traditional leaders, and the community. In contrast, urban areas such as Denpasar and Buleleng faced challenges due to weak social mobilization and limited public communication.

The results indicate that the quality of public services in electoral governance is inseparable from the community's socio-cultural characteristics, information technology readiness, and the institutional capacity of organizers. Higher-quality public services by the KPU, in terms of transparency, information openness, and inclusiveness, will increase public trust in the election organizers, which in turn will lead to high levels of active voter participation. Like it or not, the withering of public services will lower enthusiasm and diminish the legitimacy of elections. Consequently, this research offers strategies to advance KPU as a democratic public service institution.

The priority is to strengthen voter logistics and administrative systems to reduce latency in the delivery of election forms and equipment through the use of digital tracking technology. Second, interpretive frameworks for election socialization should be developed in relation to community structures, including traditional village networks, religious leaders, schools, and civil society organizations, to ensure that election messages permeate society. Third, the KPU can develop interactive digital platforms, such as mobile voter assistance and online help desks, to be more responsive to public needs, with particular regard for younger and first-time voters. Fourth, training for KPU human resources in public communication, excellent public service, and participatory election management is needed so that each officer understands their role as a democratic servant rather than just a technical implementer. Fifth, to measure the effectiveness of electoral services more objectively and sustainably, there should be periodic evaluations based on service-quality indicators.

Theoretically, this paper expands our understanding of the relationship between public services and electoral accountability by showing that winning elections depends not only on following procedures but also on how well the general population feels served and represented as equal citizens. In the view of Power et al. (2024), public services that are responsive and empathetic support citizens' political trust, the foundation for their long-term democratic legitimacy (2024). Thus, the KPU's strategy for improving public service quality is an important step toward realizing substantive democracy in Indonesia. Integrity elections are more than just the processes of holding free and fair elections; they also involve

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transparent, innovative ideas for citizen-oriented, collaborative public services. Elections that are open, fair, and empathetic will restore public trust so that democracy in Indonesia is not merely procedural but socially just and participatory.

That said, we acknowledged that our research has certain limitations: first, reliance on institutional documents. The research is based on official KPU post-election evaluation reports and Bawaslu monitoring reports, which might have been institutionally framed or selectively reported; second, it is limited to direct observation. By contrast, because KPU operational processes, such as staffing procedures, are not subject to direct internal observation, our understanding of organizational politics and informal institutional behaviour, including failures in inter-unit coordination, is limited; third, social desirability bias. As a typical limitation associated with interview-based research (Bryman, 2016), informants may have underreported institutional failures or overstated compliance with electoral procedures; fourth, temporal constraint. At the time of writing, some aspects of the evaluation of Pilkada Bali were still being formally collated and may therefore have limited the comprehensiveness of the documentary data.

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