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Journal Homepage : <https://www.journal.unrika.ac.id/index.php/jurnaltriaspolitika>**VOTING BEHAVIOR OF INDIGENOUS MINORITIES IN LOCAL ELECTIONS:
KAMPA COMMUNITY IN PASAMAN****Fadli Afriandi^{1*}, Ikhwan Rahmatika Latif², Ligar Abdillah³, Fachriza Ariyadi⁴, Sapto Setyo Nugroho⁵**^{1,2} Department of State Administration, FISIP, Universitas Teuku Umar, Indonesia³ Department of Sociology, FISIP, Universitas Teuku Umar, Indonesia⁴ Department of Islamic Political Thought, Faculty of Ushuluddin, UIN Datokarama, Indonesia⁵ Department of Government Science, FHSIP, Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia

Abstract : Voting behavior is an important part of the democratic process which can investigate the factors that influence constituents in choosing leaders. The purpose of this paper is to find out how the voting behavior of indigenous minority communities in determining leaders. The indigenous minority community is the object of research, which means that the community is part of the indigenous ethnic element but because of its origin from another area, it is considered a migrant. The main argument of this paper is that Kampa people choose regional heads influenced by sociological factors based on the social environment. This research is a qualitative study using the Social Circle Theory by George Simmel. In this study, data was collected using primary data through direct interviews, and secondary data was collected through scientific journals and online mass media. The results of the study found that the voting behavior of the Kampa community was influenced by first, namely political preferences which vote based on considerations from traditional leaders, second geopolitics where geographically the area inhabited is the majority of Minangkabau tribes, and third based on socio-economic structures that influence rational reasons for choosing regional heads.

Keywords : identity; kampa; voting behavior; elections; social environment.

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**INTRODUCTION**

This paper is a study of people's voting behavior in regional elections. The study of voting behavior is important because voting behavior is part of electoral activities that can influence elections and determine the success of one's candidacy to become a leader. The study of voting behavior in this paper proves that the study of voting behavior so far in Indonesia has been too boxed into two main motivations, namely primordial factors and rational selective (Afriandi, 2019; Hawing et al., 2025; Jati, 2021). This paper considers that these two things can be together as a motivation for community voting behavior which considers primordial aspects and rational choices in choosing a candidate for regional head at one time.

In a democratic system, elections serve as a fundamental mechanism for implementing representative governance (Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2019; Fatas et al., 2024). The vast territory and large population of a country make it impractical for citizens to gather and make decisions directly, thereby necessitating elections as a tool for selecting representatives. Elections are not only a means of transferring power, but also function as a mechanism for assessing public support and legitimacy. Furthermore, elections absorb the aspirations of the people and serve

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as a measure of how well popular sovereignty is upheld (Wardhana, 2020). Regular elections for limited terms of office help prevent authoritarianism, ensuring that leadership remains accountable and power is exercised within constitutional limits (Basuki, 2020). For this reason, elections must be held freely, fairly, and at regular intervals to preserve the democratic order (Yunita & Maulia, 2024).

An essential aspect of electoral dynamics lies in understanding citizens voting behavior. Voting behavior, whether at the national or local level, significantly influences the success or failure of political candidates (Fauzi, 2019). Studying this behavior helps to explain why individuals choose certain candidates while rejecting others (Ferdian et al., 2019). Recognizing voting patterns also enables campaign teams to design targeted strategies and effectively position their candidates. Among various forms of political participation, voting holds a particularly strong impact, as it directly shapes political configurations and limits power structures within the political system (Afriandi, 2019).

Pasaman is one of the regency inhabited by various ethnic groups. The two largest ethnic groups in the region are the Minangkabau and Mandailing ethnicities (Prabowo, 2020). The existence of these two ethnic groups not only affects the social and cultural life of the community, but also has a significant impact on the dynamics of identity politics, especially in regional head elections (pilkada). In every local election contestation, ethnic identity is often taken into consideration in the formation of candidate pairs (Rif'an, 2020; Said, 2023; Wingarta et al., 2021; Zaini et al., 2023). For example, in Pasaman if a regent candidate comes from Minangkabau ethnicity, then his partner as a candidate for vice regent usually comes from Mandailing ethnicity, and vice versa. This phenomenon of identity politics has been going on consistently for at least the last two decades in regional leadership.

Table 1. Regent and Vice Regent of Pasaman by Ethnicity

Year	Regent	Vice Regent
2005-2010	Yusuf Lubis (Mandailing)	Hamdi Burhan (Minangkabau)
2010-2015	Benny Utama (Minangkabau)	Daniel Lubis (Mandailing)
2016-2021	Yusuf Lubis (Mandailing)	Atos Pratama (Minangkabau)
2021-2025	Benny Utama (Minangkabau)	Sabar AS (Mandailing)
2025-2030	Welly Suhery (Minangkabau)	Parulian Dalimunthe (Mandailing)

Source: Compiled from various sources

This research examines the voting behavior of indigenous minorities who are the main object of study. Indigenous minority communities in this context are indigenous ethnic groups who live in an area, but come from other regions. The research focused on Pasaman Regency, where the majority of the population is ethnic Minangkabau. The Kampa community that is the object of research is a Minangkabau group from outside Pasaman, specifically from the Kampar region (which is now included in Riau Province), who have migrated and settled in Pasaman. Although both are Minangkabau, psychologically the Minangkabau community in Pasaman is considered not fully integrated with the Kampa community.

To strengthen the theoretical novelty, this study connects the analysis of the Kampa community's voting behavior with the broader literature on indigenous and minority political participation. Research on indigenous peoples' participation in local democracy such as in Canada and in the Americas shows that geographical marginalization and limited access to political networks often shape distinctive forms of political rationality among indigenous voters

(Carrière & Koop, 2023; Cornell, 2015). By situating the Kampa case within this global discourse, this paper contributes to the understanding of how marginalized sub-ethnic groups within dominant ethnic categories construct hybrid voting behavior blending cultural loyalty and pragmatic political reasoning. Thus, the novelty of this study lies in its analytical focus on an intra-ethnic minority (Kampa-Minangkabau), a phenomenon rarely explored in the Indonesian context, while conceptually extending the discussion of voting behavior to include the politics of internal marginalization among indigenous groups. Based on the above background, this study explicitly seeks to answer the following research questions: How does the Kampa indigenous minority community in Pasaman determine their voting behavior in regional head elections?

Studies of voting behavior have been of concern to researchers in political science. These studies seek to explain how and why people make political decisions, particularly in the context of elections. Before the New Order era, the voting behavior of Indonesian, both at the national and local levels, was generally still strongly influenced by primordial factors. Primordial ties such as similarity in ethnicity, religion, race, and regional origin are the main determinants in determining political choices. This is understandable considering that Indonesian society at that time was still in the stage of consolidating national identity, so that loyalty to the group of origin was more prominent than rational considerations related to the candidate's program or capability.

Entering the post-New Order era, especially after political reforms that opened up a wider democratic space, the pattern of people's voting behavior began to show a significant shift. According to Afriandi, there is a shift from a voting pattern based on primordial sentiments to a more rational pattern of voting behavior (Afriandi, 2019). In this pattern, voters begin to consider the candidate's track record, vision-mission, work program, and personal image of the candidate in making his political decisions. However, traces of primordialism are not completely gone, but often appear side by side with rational patterns in the political decision-making process of society. To look at this phenomenon, the study of identity politics usually employs three approaches: sociological, psychological, and rational. Although these approaches have different analytical frameworks, in practice they often operate simultaneously and interact to shape people's voting behavior (Afriandi, 2023).

In addition, some studies show that voting behavior is not only influenced by individual rationality, but also strongly related to local leadership and political culture. Research conducted by Mustanir and Jaya for example, reveals that leadership and political culture have a considerable contribution in shaping voters' political preferences (Mustanir & Jaya, 2016). For example, a study conducted in Towani Tolotang found that 71% of voters chose a particular candidate because of leadership factors that were considered strong and aspirational. Meanwhile, about 69% of other voters admitted that their choice was influenced by the political culture that developed in the society, including the social norms and collective values upheld in their communities.

Another study in Bengkulu shows an interesting dimension related to people's voting behavior in the governor election. The results of the study show that identity politics and candidate image are important factors that influence voter decisions. Interestingly, in this context, identity politics actually indicates a pattern of rational voting behavior. This can be seen from the success of candidates who are not from the indigenous people of Bengkulu in winning the political contest. In other words, the people of Bengkulu can look beyond tribal ties or regional origin in determining their choices, and emphasize more on the quality and capabilities of candidates. In addition, the leadership image desired by the people of Bengkulu is not just a representation of regional identity, but rather the personal character of the candidate. The people of Bengkulu tend to expect a leader who is simple, religious, intelligent, and honest (Hemay & Munandar, 2016). This shows a shift in voter orientation from mere identity

considerations to aspects of the candidate's personality and morality as the basis for assessment.

Research on voting behavior continues to evolve in line with local and national political dynamics. One of the widely used approaches is the identity politics approach, as seen in research conducted by Jama and his colleagues. In their study, Jama raised the issue of identity politics based on age categories, namely between the young age group and the old age. The results of their research show that age differences also affect voting behavior patterns, especially in terms of access and utilization of information sources. Young age groups tend to be more active in accessing political information through social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, which are the main channels in shaping perceptions of candidates. In contrast, older age groups rely more on conventional sources of information such as daily newspapers, billboards, and informal conversations in their social environment. These differences in sources of information help shape political orientations and electoral preferences that differ between generations, and show how social identity influences political behavior (Jama et al., 2021).

If in the context of Bengkulu the community has begun to show a pattern of rational voting behavior which is characterized by openness to candidates from outside the region and consideration of the candidate's personal qualities different findings were reported by Afriandi in his research in Kutai Kartanegara. Afriandi rejects the notion that society in general has completely switched to the pattern of rational voters. In the context of Kutai Kartanegara, the behavior of choosing people is still dominated by primordial sentiments, especially tribalism. Ethnic identity and kinship still play a significant role in determining political choices, showing that political rationality has not completely replaced the primordial orientation in the electoral behavior of people in the area (Afriandi, 2019).

In contrast to this context, research conducted by Rofieq and Nuryono in Bekasi Regency shows that there is a fairly strong practice of clientelism. In their findings, people's voting behavior is influenced by the transactional relationship between candidates and voters. This practice of clientelism is manifested in the form of providing certain materials or services to the community with the hope of reciprocity in the form of vote support in elections. This phenomenon shows that voter rationality in some local contexts is still strongly influenced by pragmatic power and reward relations, which in turn degrades the quality of electoral democracy at the local level (Rofieq & Nuryono, 2016). Also interesting to observe are the findings of research by Ilham and Purwaningsih which examined the phenomenon of empty box victory in the Makassar mayoral election. In the election, the empty box won the only pair of candidates carried by a political party. The victory of the empty box represents a form of political resistance from the public to the oligarchs, disappointment with the nomination process, and rejection of money politics and figures that are considered unrepresentative. This phenomenon shows that people's voting behavior is not always passive, but can also be a collective expression of resistance to political systems that are considered inaccommodating to public aspirations (Ilham & Purwaningsih, 2020).

In comparative perspective, international studies on minority and indigenous voting behavior reveal similar complexities between identity and rationality. Indigenous political participation should be understood within broader structures of representation and recognition. Voting among minority Indigenous groups, therefore, is not merely an act of individual preference but a reflection of collective identity and historical marginalization (Carrière & Koop, 2023). Indigenous peoples across Latin America engage in political activities at levels equal to or even higher than non-Indigenous citizens, both in electoral participation and in non-electoral forms of political engagement such as protests, party involvement, and political discussions. It further reveals that Indigenous political participation cannot be fully explained by structural or institutional factors of democracy alone; rather, it is deeply shaped by local community dynamics and active involvement in grassroots organizations (Boulding et al.,

2025).

From various previous studies that have been presented, it can be seen that the study of voting behavior includes various important aspects such as social identity (age and ethnicity), leadership, clientelism practices, political culture, to the phenomenon of empty boxes as a form of political resistance. Each local context presents a different configuration of factors in shaping people's electoral behavior. Therefore, such studies have an important value in understanding the complexity of electoral politics in Indonesia. This paper aims to contribute to the treasure of the study of voting behavior, especially with a focus on minority indigenous communities in the contest for regional head elections. Different from previous studies that have emphasized more on majority identity politics, clientelism, or candidate image, this paper attempts to capture how indigenous ethnic minority groups that are socioculturally part of the dominant ethnic group but geographically marginalized interpret their political choices. This focus is expected to expand the understanding of voting behavior that has not been touched much in previous studies.

This research uses the Social Circle Theory from George Simmel. Social circle theory explains that individuals always live in various intersecting groups or social circles, such as families, work environments, religious communities, ethnic groups, and certain social organizations. These circles function as a space for interaction as well as a social control mechanism that influences a person's political attitudes, views, and behavior, including in making choices during general elections. In the context of voting behavior, this theory views that an individual's political decisions are not entirely autonomous, but rather are shaped by the social norms, values, and pressures that develop within the social circle in which the individual belongs. Because of this, political preferences are often stable and follow a collective pattern (Haryanto, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research approach to explore in depth the voting behavior of the Kampa community in choosing regional heads. The qualitative method was chosen because it allows the researcher to capture the meanings, motivations, and socio-cultural contexts that shape political decisions within the indigenous minority community elements that are often invisible in quantitative surveys. This approach is therefore considered the most appropriate for understanding the intersection between identity, geography, and political choice in a marginalized sub ethnic group.

The research was conducted in Nagari Panti Selatan, which was purposively selected because it has the largest population of Kampa people compared to other areas in Pasaman Regency. A total of 12 informants participated in this study, consisting of eight members of the Kampa community (representing various age groups and occupations), two traditional leaders (ninik mamak), and two local government officials involved in village administration and elections. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on the following criteria: individuals who self-identify as members of the Kampa community and have voting rights, those who have participated in at least one regional head election, community or customary leaders who are considered influential in shaping political attitudes, and local officials with relevant knowledge about electoral participation in Nagari Panti Selatan. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, allowing informants to express their experiences and reasoning freely while providing flexibility for the researcher to probe deeper. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, and all interviews were conducted in the local language with consent from the participants. Field notes and voice recordings were taken with prior approval.

To ensure ethical standards, the research process followed principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity. The researcher explained the objectives and

voluntary nature of participation before each interview and ensured that the identity of the participants remained anonymous in reporting. Particular attention was given to respecting local customs during the data collection process, including initial consultation with community leaders (*ninik mamak*) before entering the research site. The data used in this study consisted of primary data obtained from interviews and secondary data collected from official government documents, journals, and websites. Data analysis followed the interactive analysis model which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2014). During analysis, open coding was first applied to identify recurring ideas related to motivations for voting, perceptions of candidates, and community-level influences. The codes were then grouped into categories such as *primordial considerations*, *rational evaluation*, *collective decision norms*, and *external political influence*. From these categories, three main themes were developed to explain the interplay between cultural identity and rational choice in shaping voting behavior. To enhance data validity, triangulation of sources was conducted by comparing the results of interviews with documentation data and supporting literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indigenous Intervention

The Kampa community is a society that lives in groups or races. The life of the Kampa people in their people is also tied by a strong structure. Although it is not strict, the community makes the leader of the tribe as a central figure in life. The head of the tribe is called Niniak Mamak who tries to maintain customs and traditions that will be inherited from generation to generation. This role seeks to maintain the identity and cultural sustainability of the Kampa community. Niniak mamak is a traditional leadership whose leadership not only deals with customary and cultural issues but also includes everything related to social, political, and educational life. The central role of Niniak Mamak is in accordance with the traditional proverb "*Kayu Gadang di Tengah Koto*" *ureknyo tampek ka duduak, batangnyo ka tampek basanda, dahannyo katampek bagantuang, daunnya katampek balinduang* (Amin et al., 2022). The meaning of the sentence is a description of a leader who is beneficial to many people, provides benefits, and becomes a place of dependence in many things in society.

In the Pasaman regional election, the role of Niniak Mamak in the Kampa community was influential in determining the candidate chosen. Niniak Mamak's influence in the election does not extend to relationships like client patrons who demand obedience to choose certain candidates (Biermann, 2024; Marshall, 2019). Through Simmel's *Social Circle* theory, this traditional authority forms a central circle connecting other dimensions social interaction and economic interest. *Niniak Mamak's* moral legitimacy gives direction to economic rationality, they filter which candidate's promises are seen as credible and beneficial for the community. Thus, customary intervention functions as a moral compass that legitimizes pragmatic decisions, ensuring that economic rationality remains consistent with cultural values and social harmony. This linkage shows a causal relationship without the validation of *Niniak Mamak*, economically rational choices would lose legitimacy and risk social conflict. Consequently, the Kampa people's pragmatic considerations such as selecting candidates with visible development programs are socially accepted only after being justified within the customary framework. Customary leadership therefore transforms rational calculation into a socially cohesive act, blending morality and material interest.

The customary intervention in the Kampa community is also different from the noken system that applies in Papua. The noken system leaves the voice of the entire community to the traditional chief as a representative of the people's will (Ronsumbre, 2019) while in the Kampa community, it gives individuals freedom to choose. Niniak Mamak as a traditional leader has intelligence, wisdom and wisdom in determining and considering candidates who

are considered worthy of being leaders in the next Pasaman Regency. In addition to having intelligence and wisdom, Niniak Mamak understands well the needs and aspirations of the Kampa people he leads, so Niniak Mamak's choice is a choice that is in favor of the community.

"We, the community, are trying to discuss with Niniak Mamak regarding candidates in the regional elections. I don't know if there is a view from Niniak Mamak that opens our minds so that the chosen candidate pays attention to our area". (Interview with Kampa Society, May 2023)

In the perspective of the Social Circle theory by George Simmel, individuals do not live in isolation, but rather are in various overlapping social circles, such as families, indigenous communities, and local communities. The Kampa people, as a social entity, form a strong social circle in which the traditional values and authority of the Niniak Mamak are central. Niniak Mamak's position is at the intersection of several customary, spiritual, and political circles so that his views become the main reference in the collective decision making process, including in the election contest. This suggests that the voting behavior of the Kampa people cannot be understood through individual preferences alone, but rather as the result of complex social interactions within their social circle networks.

In this context, political decisions become part of cultural reproduction and a symbol of honor in society. The discussion with Niniak Mamak was not only a political act, but also a form of symbolic communication that strengthened the collective identity of the Kampa community. Niniak Mamak's involvement in political preferences is not a form of domination, but an organic function in the social structure of society that prioritizes deliberation and harmony of values. This process shows how local customs and democracy are not always at odds, but can be mutually reinforcing in shaping choices that are seen as appropriate and socially safe.

The Kampa community generally has a lower secondary education level so the analysis of the ideal candidate for them is left to Niniak Mamak. Niniak Mamak is appreciated for her intelligence in providing input related to the conditions and situation of the regional elections. For the people of Kampa Niniak Mamak, it is not only looking at the candidate's past track record but also the ability to analyze the development of the times and political dynamics. Niniak Mamak plays a role in the political education process for his people who not only provide input on the best candidates but also guide the public to understand the political process. Niniak Mamak's political education also provides knowledge related to the political rights of the community and the urgency of community participation in realizing development in Pasaman Regency. This makes Niniak Mamak not only a determinant of votes for candidates in the Pasaman regional election but also to build the political awareness of the people of Pasaman.

The opinion of Niniak Mamak by the Kampa people is considered as a high customary position in the political life of the Kampa people. The decision given by Niniak Mamak is a representation of customary authorities who are respected by his people. The Kampa people also position Niniak Mamak as a respected person according to the saying *"Didahulukan salangkah, ditinggikan sarantiang"*. The meaning of the saying is to prioritize and elevate the dignity of others, as a form of manners, while maintaining social harmony (Khusairi et al., 2023). With respect to Niniak Mamak in giving the views of the Pasaman election candidates, the community believes that the decision issued has taken into account the customary values recognized by the Kampa people. The magnitude of Niniak Mamak's legitimacy in the Kampa community, so the votes given to the candidates after going through the discussion phase with Niniak Mamak convince the community that the elected leader will not disappoint them.

Social and Regional

Minority communities often face dilemmas in making political choices, especially in the context of regional elections that take place in certain ethnically dominated areas. Minority communities tend to choose what the majority chooses to avoid social isolation. Social isolation causes minority communities to become isolated in the community group, reducing interaction with each other and resulting in a sense of discomfort and unwanted in the community group (Sukmawati et al., 2023). Simmel's framework clarifies this dynamic, overlapping social circles customary, regional, and political create pressures toward consensus. Majority influence shapes the acceptable boundaries of individual and group choices. The causal link appears in how social pressure moderates the effect of indigenous authority. Even if *Niniak Mamak* recognizes a candidate's moral worth, that endorsement is often calibrated against the majority's political climate. If traditional endorsement contradicts dominant sentiment, it risks generating social isolation or loss of influence. Therefore, the social regional environment acts as a constraint that forces traditional legitimacy to adapt, aligning cultural authority with the pragmatic necessity of coexistence. This interaction illustrates how local democracy is negotiated between preserving identity and achieving social inclusion.

In the conditions of the regional elections in Pasaman, this phenomenon is also experienced by the Kampa community where the massive interaction between the Kampa people and other majority residents affects them in making choices. Indirectly, this effort is carried out in order to maintain social harmony and avoid potential conflicts that will occur. For the Kampa community, the strategy they carry out by participating in voting for the majority vote is a step that needs to be taken to ensure their representation in the regional policies that will be issued. The phenomenon that occurs in the Kampa society can be explained through Georg Simmel's Social Circle theory which emphasizes that individuals live in various overlapping social circles. In the context of the regional elections, the Kampa community as a minority community can be pressured to vote for certain candidates due to the application of normative norms in their community. The Kampa community will adjust their choices to the larger group in order to be accepted and avoid social isolation. Cases of social isolation can still appear when the regional elections are over. Even though the election has been completed, the impact of those who choose to oppose the voters of the winning candidate continues (Samosir, 2021). For example, in national politics in Indonesia, there is polarization with the formation of the *cebong-kampret* phenomenon. Each supporter in the presidential election continues to conflict after the presidential election is completed (Panzi et al., 2023).

The majority community group has a significant influence in shaping public opinion and dominating local political discourse. Strong interaction and public opinion that are continuously formed make the community affected by the message conveyed. The majority society is not only the determinant of their political direction, but also the shaping of social norms that eventually become an absolute truth. In the context of the regional elections, the dominance carried out by the majority community reduces the courage of the minority community to voice and express their political prestige. This condition is considering the impact caused such as social rejection or negative stigma from the community from the majority group.

The Kampa community is a minority community that lives and lives in an area inhabited by the Minang Pasaman people. The Kampa people, who live in the majority area of Minang Pasaman, are influenced by the public discourse built by the majority. As a result, the people of Kampa have come to feel that the opinions brought by the majority of the community are true. The dependence on social interaction with the majority group, directly or indirectly, makes the Kampa people vulnerable to social pressure.

Geographically, the Kampa people live in remote areas and far from the center of the Pasaman government also exacerbate information inequality. Geographical remoteness makes

access to information hampered and limited. The limited access to this information makes the discourse brought difficult to avoid. This information imbalance strengthens the political hegemony carried by the majority group. The formation of this political hegemony is able to perpetuate the dominance of the majority group of society. In addition, political hegemony is also able to create social dependency that forces minority communities to adapt to avoid social exclusion. The durability of this relationship will create political imbalances, hinder inclusivity, and the gap between the majority and the minority.

George Simmel in the theory of social interaction said that people in a homogeneous and dominant social environment tend to participate in the social conditions that shape them (Fellmann, 2018). The conditions experienced by the Kampa community are relevant to what Simmel said in his theory that minority communities tend to vote according to the public discourse built by the majority. In social groups, geographical proximity (neighboring life) can affect one individual with another, even one group with another. This social interaction is what makes the behavior of choosing the Kampa community choose in accordance with the choices built or directed by the majority.

Economic Rationality

The economic rationality factor also affects the behavior of choosing the Kampa community. This economic rationality factor is a consideration taken by individuals or groups based on the calculation of profit and loss which is more practical and directly felt. In the context of the regional elections in Pasaman, the Kampa people do not fully consider ethnic similarities or be influenced by customs. Preferences for candidates in the regional elections are influenced by the expectation of meeting the needs of the community as reflected in physical and non-physical development programs, such as social and economic assistance, road and bridge construction, and health services.

The Kampa community is a community with middle to lower conditions that depend on economic activities in the informal sector. The work carried out by the Kampa people is engaged in agriculture, small trade, or freelance daily work (labor). This condition is an instrument in shaping political relations in fighting for access to resources between the community and the state. In the context of the regional elections in Pasaman, candidates who have a track record of distributing development programs become more attractive and promising to be elected. For example, Benny Utama's track record as the Regent of Pasaman who carries out physical development in the Kampa community area in the form of the construction of roads, bridges and health services is a priority candidate for this community group.

"We see that Mr. Benny often goes to our village. Our village is built with roads and bridges so that our access between villages is easier. In our village, a health service place was also built so that we don't have to go far to go to other places." (Interview with Kampa Society, May 2023).

However, economic rationality does not function autonomously. It operates within the moral approval of *Niniak Mamak* and the social constraints of majority dominance. *Niniak Mamak*'s endorsement legitimizes material considerations, converting economic interest into a morally justified choice. Meanwhile, the need to maintain good relations with the majority ensures that rational choices remain socially acceptable. In the theory of the Social Circle, George Simmel does not see society living in a single social space. Simmel in his theory sees that people live in intersecting social circles such as in the family, indigenous peoples' associations, and the economy. In socio-economic circles, it can shape the way of thinking, speaking, acting, and making decisions, especially in the regional elections. The Kampa people

in this economic circle are able to see politics when they meet in a space to convey ideas, thoughts, and attitudes. Spaces such as farmer groups and coffee shops become arenas where political issues are discussed in the language of concrete needs: *"who can help us?"* or *"Which candidate can build our path?"*.

This form of selective behavior is seen as able to provide concrete "retribution" so that it shows a mild clientelism based on the rationality of needs even though it is not completely transactional. In the context of a vulnerable economic society like Kampa, voters tend to consider candidates who have a track record of meeting their basic needs. These political decisions are not entirely emotional or identity-based but arise from the rationality of needs, namely efforts to maximize political benefits for the group through the most socially and economically advantageous choices.

Political preferences are formed not personally, but through horizontal discussions between members of the social economic circle. This process is a form of internal deliberation that leads to the formation of collective opinions based on social rationality. Thus, the political decisions of the Kampa people remain in a social structure that is bound by collective norms, but is supported by the logic of practical advantage.

This rationality never stands autonomously. The rationality that emerges also intersects with customary authority and majority pressure. Under certain conditions, rational choices do not become so popular if they do not gain legitimacy from traditional leaders or are contrary to the majority. Simmel's opinion in this suggests that socioeconomic circles do not work in isolation, but become part of a broader configuration of social power. The Kampa society in Simmel terms is in a layered social structure, where different actors and norms shape political decisions simultaneously and influence each other. The case in the Kampa community shows the direction that is in line between the customs, the majority, and the rationality of the Kampa community. This behavior of choice shows that it is not a completely free individual decision, but rather the result of social harmony that forms one dominant choice.

Rational voting behavior in Kampa society is not the result of independent individual calculations, but is born from interactions in plural and dynamic social networks. As a group that lives in limited access to information and infrastructure, the Kampa people use electoral politics as one of the channels to achieve social and economic security. However, these political preferences are still filtered through customary values, social norms, and the position of individuals in the various social circles in which they belong. An understanding of the political behavior of minority communities such as Kampa shows that interconnected social circles can create a configuration of pressure as well as opportunity in the dynamics of local democracy.

Hence, rational voting behavior among the Kampa people is a hybrid construct neither purely traditional nor purely instrumental. Instead, it is the outcome of negotiation among moral legitimacy, social conformity, and material expectation.

Table 2. Integrative Causal Framework

Factor	Causal Function	Interaction with Other Factors	Outcome
Indigenous Intervention (<i>Niniak Mamak</i>)	Provides moral and cultural legitimacy to political decisions	Shapes which economic and political choices are considered proper	Customary values justify pragmatic decisions
Social & Regional Pressure	Enforces conformity to majority norms	Limits the autonomy of indigenous and rational choices	Ensures social cohesion and political safety
Economic Rationality	Motivates voters through material expectations	Depends on traditional approval and majority acceptance	Produces adaptive and pragmatic voting patterns

Source: Processed by the author

The interaction among these three factors demonstrates that the political behavior of the Kampa community is neither irrationally traditional nor purely instrumental. Instead, it represents a culturally rational strategy a negotiated balance between moral authority, social adaptation, and economic survival.

Limitations and Future Research

This study, while providing valuable insights into the interplay between customary authority, social context, and economic rationality, has several limitations. First, the number of informants was limited to key community members within Nagari Panti Selatan, which may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives within the wider Kampa population. As a result, the generalizability of findings remains low, given the context specific nature of qualitative inquiry. Second, while triangulation was employed to enhance credibility, the depth of coding and thematic development may still be constrained by the researcher's interpretation and by the sensitive nature of engaging with an indigenous community. Ethical considerations limited the scope of probing certain political affiliations or candidate specific issues.

Future research could address these limitations by adopting a comparative approach across different indigenous or minority groups, allowing for cross-case analysis of how cultural authority and economic rationality interact under varying political structures. Moreover, mixed-method or quantitative designs such as survey-based modeling of voting determinants would help validate and measure the relative weight of each factor identified here. Finally, longitudinal studies could explore how generational change and digital access transform the influence of customary leaders and majority pressures in shaping indigenous political participation.

CONCLUSION

Research on the behavior of choosing minority communities in Pasaman does not show a single, neither primordial nor rational approach. Voting behavior in the Kampa community can be understood that voting behavior is influenced by the interaction of the two, namely primordial in the form of custom, and rational through consideration of economic rationality. The behavior of choosing the Kampa people was first influenced by the traditional social structure. This traditional social structure is in the form of customary intervention through the role of Ninik Mamak. Ninik Mamak had a significant role in shaping the political preferences of the Kampa people even though it did not lead to patronage relationships that demanded loyalty or obedience in making political choices. Apart from being a symbolic figure in customs, Niniak Mamak is also an important actor in the deliberative process and political education of the Kampa community. The decisions taken by the community in the election of regional heads are mostly through deliberation and social legitimacy provided by these traditional leaders.

The behavior of choosing the Kampa community is secondly influenced by social and geography. As a minority group living in the majority Minangkabau Pasaman neighborhood, the Kampa people face social pressure to adjust their political choices in order to maintain social integration and avoid stigmatization. This phenomenon shows the existence of the political hegemony of the majority that indirectly shapes the behavior of choosing minority groups. The third factor, namely economic rationality, is also the main consideration in determining political choices. The Kampa community, which mostly works in the informal sector, tends to support candidates with a real development track record and promise to improve welfare.

Using the framework of George Simmel's Social Circle Theory, this study confirms that the political behavior of the Kampa people is shaped by their involvement in various

overlapping customary, ethnic majority, and economic social circles. The political preferences taken are not autonomous individual decisions, but rather the result of a collective process conditioned by the norms, values, and interests that develop in those circles.

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