

Political Mobilization Through Bureaucratic Channels: The Roles Of Camat And Lurah In Gowa Regency

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Abstract: This study analyzes the utilization of district heads (camat) and sub-district heads (lurah) as instruments for mobilizing political support in Gowa Regency. Using in-depth interview data from nine key informants, including the Regent of Gowa, this research uncovers a comprehensive strategy for leveraging bureaucracy for electoral mobilization. The analysis is conducted through four theoretical frameworks: structural functionalism, exchange theory, populism, and neo-institutionalism. The findings reveal a pattern of representative bureaucracy based on familial ties, loyalty-patronage exchange, a populist approach in development programs, and the development of informal institutions in bureaucratic management. The combination of these strategies contributed to a significant increase in vote acquisition from 32% in the first term to 91% in the second term. These findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms behind the use of local bureaucracy in the context of Indonesia's electoral politics.

Keywords: Representative Bureaucracy, Electoral Mobilization, Political Loyalty, Populist Programs, Local Governance

INTRODUCTION

Political Reform in Post-New Order Indonesia has brought significant changes to the electoral dimension, particularly the introduction of direct local elections through Law No. 32 of 2004. This shift in the electoral system has created new dynamics in local political contests, where candidates for local office must develop effective strategies to mobilize support in order to secure electoral victory. These dynamics become increasingly complex within the Indonesian societal context, which remains deeply embedded in patron-client relations and primordial ties such as kinship and territorial identity.

In efforts to build and maintain political power at the local level, governmental bureaucracy is often employed as a strategic instrument by incumbents. The phenomenon of bureaucratic politicization in electoral contests has become a central concern in local political studies (Tamma, 2016; Hidayat, 2017; Nordholt & van Klinken, 2007). Although numerous studies have explored this phenomenon at a general level, a significant gap remains in understanding the specific mechanisms by which certain bureaucratic positions, particularly district heads (camat) and sub-district chiefs (lurah), are utilized as tools for political mobilization.

This study specifically investigates such a phenomenon in Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, which offers a unique context for analyzing the interaction between electoral politics and local bureaucracy. Gowa presents complex socio-cultural characteristics, blending traditional (kingdom-based) and modern power structures, alongside geographical diversity (highlands and lowlands), which creates distinct geopolitical dynamics. Of particular interest is the case in which the incumbent dramatically increased electoral support from 32% in the first election to 91% in the second, raising critical questions about the political strategies employed.

The roles of district heads and sub-district chiefs in contemporary Indonesia have grown increasingly complex since the implementation of regional autonomy. While these positions are formally designated as part of a neutral, professional bureaucracy, in practice, they often operate within a "grey zone" between administrative and political functions (Hidayat, 2017). These officials possess direct access to local communities and play crucial roles in implementing government programs, positioning them as strategic actors in political mobilization. This study seeks to uncover how these dynamics unfold within the specific context of Gowa Regency.

A deeper understanding of this phenomenon not only contributes to the broader literature on local politics in Indonesia but also carries practical implications for bureaucratic reform and the strengthening of local democracy. By examining the specific mechanisms through which camat and lurah positions are used as instruments for political

mobilization, this research provides pathways for more effective policy formulation to safeguard bureaucratic neutrality in electoral contests.

The politicization of bureaucracy in Indonesia has garnered increasing academic attention in the post-reformasi era. Nordholt & van Klinken (2007) argue that democratization in Indonesia has not entirely eliminated entrenched practices in local politics, including patronage and bureaucratic politicization. Aspinall & Sukmajati (2015) further identify a range of “money politics” strategies in Indonesian elections, including the mobilization of the bureaucracy for electoral gain. Meanwhile, Hadiz (2010) contends that decentralization has in fact reinforced local oligarchies that frequently leverage the bureaucracy as a tool of power.

While these studies provide a macro framework for understanding the politicization of bureaucracy, they remain limited in explaining the micro-level mechanisms through which specific bureaucratic positions, such as *camat* and *lurah*, are mobilized in electoral strategies. Tamma (2016) has begun to address this gap by analyzing the role of sub-district bureaucracy in local political contests, yet his focus remains on the sub-district level and does not comprehensively account for dynamics at the district and urban sub-district levels.

Within the broader context of bureaucratic reform, Prasojo (2010) emphasizes the importance of bureaucratic neutrality in electoral contests as a prerequisite for good governance. McLeod (2008) adds that the legacy of patronage within the Indonesian bureaucracy remains a significant challenge to reform. It is important to note that these studies tend to be normative in orientation and have yet to fully explore the empirical realities of how bureaucracy is utilized within political strategies.

The theory of representative bureaucracy, developed by Kingsley (1944) and later expanded by Krislov (1974) and Meier (1975), offers a useful conceptual framework for analyzing this phenomenon. This theory distinguishes between two forms of representation in the bureaucracy: passive representation (demographic) and active representation (advocacy). In the Indonesian context, Hidayat (2017) adapts this framework to examine how local bureaucracies serve as arenas for the representation of various interests, including political, ethnic, and territorial affiliations.

The concept of political patronage, defined by Scott (1972) as an exchange relationship between patrons who control resources and clients who seek access to those resources, is also relevant in this context. Aspinall (2014) applies this concept to the study of electoral politics in Indonesia and finds that patronage remains a central feature of political mobilization despite democratization. Hadiz & Robison (2013) further argue that Indonesia’s political reforms have yet to fundamentally transform these deeply rooted patron-client relationships.

In relation to political reconciliation strategies, the concept of power-sharing, developed by Lijphart (1977) and expanded by Horowitz (1985), offers a framework for understanding how political elites accommodate diverse interest groups, including opposition actors, within structures of power. In the Indonesian context, Mietzner (2013) illustrates how local elites adopt accommodation strategies to mitigate conflict and consolidate power. However, how such strategies are implemented through the appointment of *camat* and *lurah* remains underexplored in the literature.

Studies on populist programs in electoral politics in Indonesia have also been conducted by several scholars. Fossati (2016), for example, analyzes how welfare programs are used as tools for mobilizing political support. Davidson (2018) explores how local leaders use populist programs to cultivate a public image of responsiveness to community needs. However, these studies have yet to specifically analyze the roles of *camat* and *lurah* in the implementation of such programs for electoral purposes.

While the existing literature offers valuable conceptual insights, it remains incomplete in explaining how the positions of *camat* and *lurah* are strategically employed in political support mobilization at the local level. This study seeks to address that gap by providing a detailed empirical analysis in the context of Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi.

This research employs a conceptual framework that integrates several relevant theories to develop a comprehensive understanding of how the positions of *camat* and *lurah* are used as instruments for political mobilization. The representative bureaucracy theory (Kingsley, 1944; Krislov, 1974) is utilized to analyze how these officials are appointed to represent various interests, including geographic regions and kinship groups. The concepts of passive and active representation are applied to assess how the demographic composition and advocacy actions of bureaucrats influence political support mobilization.

The political patronage framework (Scott, 1972; Aspinall, 2014) is employed to examine the relationship between the regent as patron and *camat/lurah* as clients, and how this relationship is leveraged to mobilize community support.

This theory helps explain the logic behind selection criteria that prioritize loyalty over other qualifications, as well as resource distribution patterns that align with patronage networks.

The power-sharing theory (Lijphart, 1977; Horowitz, 1985) is applied to analyze the political reconciliation strategies enacted through the strategic appointment of Camat and Lurah. This framework helps explain how appointing officials from diverse political backgrounds, including former opposition members, serves as an accommodation mechanism to reduce conflict and expand support bases.

Literature on populist policy and electoral mobilization (Fossati, 2016; Davidson, 2018) is used to analyze how programs such as education, local economic protection, and aid distribution are implemented through district and sub-district bureaucrats for electoral purposes. These concepts help explain how such programs are designed and executed to maximize their political impact.

These four conceptual frameworks are integrated to form a comprehensive analytical model that explains how the offices of Camat and Lurah are utilized as instruments of political support mobilization. The model emphasizes the interaction of institutional (bureaucratic structure), relational (patronage), strategic (power-sharing), and programmatic (populist policies) aspects in shaping electoral dynamics.

This research adopts an interpretive approach within the tradition of social constructivism, emphasizing how political realities are shaped through social interaction and the interpretation of meaning (Bevir & Rhodes, 2016). This approach enables a deep exploration of how political actors understand and make sense of the use of Camat and Lurah positions in strategies of support mobilization. Consistent with the interpretive tradition, this research does not aim to identify universal laws, but rather to uncover patterns and logics of action within the specific socio-political context of Gowa Regency.

Based on the background and literature review presented, this study seeks to answer several critical questions concerning the use of Camat and Lurah positions as instruments for political support mobilization in Gowa Regency:

1. How is the placement pattern of district heads (Camat) and sub-district heads (Lurah) in Gowa Regency shaped in the context of political support mobilization strategies?
2. What are the main criteria used in the selection and placement of district and sub-district heads, and how do these criteria reflect political interests?
3. How is the political reconciliation strategy implemented through the placement of district and sub-district heads from various political groups?
4. How are populist programs implemented through district and sub-district heads to build and maintain political support?

These questions are designed to uncover various dimensions of the use of district and sub-district head positions as instruments for mobilizing political support, from aspects of placement, selection criteria, mobilization mechanisms, reconciliation strategies, to program implementation. Through these questions, the research aims to produce a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

This research holds significant importance from both theoretical and practical perspectives in understanding the dynamics of local politics in contemporary Indonesia. From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the literature on electoral politics, bureaucracy, and governance in several ways. First, it expands the understanding of representative bureaucracy theory by applying it in the Indonesian context, where territorial and kinship representation considerations are important factors in bureaucratic appointments. Second, the research enriches the literature on political patronage by exploring the micro-level mechanisms through which patron-client relations operate within local bureaucracies in Indonesia. Third, the study offers a new perspective on understanding power-sharing strategies at the local level, particularly how political accommodation is implemented through the bureaucracy. Fourth, it contributes to the literature on populist programs by analyzing how such programs are designed and implemented for electoral purposes.

Furthermore, this study fills a gap in the literature by combining institutional, relational, strategic, and programmatic analyses to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the positions of district and sub-district heads are utilized in the mobilization of political support. The conceptual model developed in this study can be used as an analytical framework to examine similar phenomena in other regions, thereby contributing to the development of local political theory in Indonesia.

From a practical perspective, this study holds significance for several stakeholders. For policymakers, the findings can inform bureaucratic reform and the strengthening of local governance, especially regarding the neutrality of the bureaucracy in political contests. For civil society organizations, this research provides insights into the mechanisms of bureaucratic politicization that can serve as a basis for advocacy and public oversight. For prospective regional leaders and campaign teams, it offers insights into effective strategies for mobilizing political support through the local bureaucracy. For the general public, this research contributes to political literacy by revealing how the bureaucracy is used in political contests.

Empirically, Gowa Regency presents a unique and significant case for analysis due to several factors. First, the dramatic increase in the incumbent's vote share from 32% to 91% reflects an extraordinary success in political mobilization, making the mechanisms behind it worthy of exploration. Second, the socio-cultural complexity of Gowa Regency, with its blend of traditional and modern power structures, offers a rich context for analyzing how modern bureaucracy interacts with traditional values. Third, the geographical diversity of Gowa Regency (highlands and lowlands) allows for analysis of how territorial factors influence political mobilization strategies.

In the context of Indonesia's democratization, this study is broadly significant for understanding the challenges and complexities in achieving democratic governance at the local level. By revealing how the positions of district and sub-district heads are utilized as instruments of political mobilization, the research contributes to broader discussions on bureaucratic reform, the strengthening of local democracy, and the separation between public administration and electoral politics.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore in depth how the positions of *camat* (district heads) and *lurah* (urban sub-district heads) are utilized as instruments for mobilizing political support in Gowa Regency. The case study method was chosen because it enables an in-depth exploration of complex socio-political phenomena within a specific context (Yin, 2018). This approach aligns with the research objective, which seeks to understand specific mechanisms and the logic of actions in the use of *camat* and *lurah* positions for electoral purposes.

Data collection was conducted using a combination of methods to ensure triangulation and validity of the findings. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants selected through purposive sampling to ensure the representation of various perspectives. Informants included the Regent of Gowa, *camat*, *lurah*, officials from relevant government agencies (including the Head of the Regional Revenue Agency, Head of the Education Office, Head of the National and Political Unity Agency, and the Regional Secretary), as well as other relevant individuals. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach, allowing for in-depth exploration of topics that emerged during the interviews.

Document analysis was used to complement the primary data from interviews. The documents analyzed included policy documents, program reports, statistical data on electoral results, and other relevant materials related to the placement of *camat* and *lurah*, as well as program implementation. Field observations were also conducted to understand the socio-political context and the implementation of programs in various areas of Gowa Regency.

Data analysis employed a thematic analysis approach, which identifies, analyzes, and reports patterns or themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process included several stages: (1) familiarization with the data through transcription and repeated reading, (2) initial coding, (3) searching for potential themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. NVivo software was used to assist in the coding and thematic analysis process.

The specific analytical strategies used included coding and categorization of data, theme frequency analysis, matrix coding queries to identify relationship patterns between themes and informants, word queries to analyze keyword frequency, relationship analysis to identify inter-theme patterns, and the development of a conceptual model to visually represent the findings. These strategies enabled a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the collected data.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, several strategies were implemented in accordance with the criteria developed by Lincoln & Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility

was ensured through source and method triangulation, member checking with informants, and prolonged engagement in the field. Transferability was supported through thick description of the research context, methods, and findings. Dependability was guaranteed through comprehensive documentation of the research process and an audit trail. Confirmability was supported through researcher reflexivity and triangulation. Research ethics were upheld by ensuring informed consent from all informants, guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity when requested, providing honest information about the research purpose, and ensuring that the study posed no risk to informants. Formal research permission was obtained from relevant authorities, and ethical procedures were followed throughout the research process.

Through this comprehensive and systematic methodological approach, the study aims to produce a deep and valid understanding of how the positions of Camat and Lurah are utilized as instruments of political support mobilization in Gowa Regency.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study presents a comprehensive analysis of political strategies across five main domains, documenting the frequency of references and the diversity of sources for each subtopic (Table 1). The analysis reveals several significant patterns regarding how political strategies are documented and prioritized.

In examining the node "Selection and Recruitment Criteria," the highest number of references (41) is observed among all categories. Within this domain, "Loyalty" emerges as the most frequently cited subtopic (15 citations from 7 sources), indicating the importance of loyalty in the selection process. The strong emphasis on loyalty, along with the high number of references to "Compliance with Rules" (11 references from 6 sources), suggests that personal loyalty and adherence to protocol are valued more than technical competence in the political recruitment framework under study.

The category "Bureaucrat Placement Patterns" shows the second highest overall number of references (38). Notably within this category are "Regional Representation" with 12 references from 5 sources, and "Political Loyalty Considerations" with 10 references from 6 sources. This pattern indicates that geographic representation and political loyalty significantly influence bureaucratic placements, reinforcing the theme of loyalty observed in recruitment criteria.

The domain "Electoral Mobilization" shows balanced attention across its subtopics, with "Indirect Political Communication" receiving the most references (10 from 6 sources). This suggests that sophisticated communication strategies play a central role in election campaigns beyond direct voter engagement.

In the category of "Populist Programs," "Education Programs" stands out with 12 references from 5 sources, highlighting the strategic importance of education in populist political agendas. The relatively high reference-to-source ratio (2.4) indicates that these programs receive in-depth discussion when mentioned.

The node "Political Reconciliation Strategies" receives the lowest total number of references (27), with "Opposition Group Accommodation" being the most prominent (9 references from 5 sources). This may reflect that reconciliation strategies, while important, receive less documentation attention compared to other political dimensions.

When analyzing the reference-to-source ratio, three subtopics show particularly high values: "Loyalty" (2.14), "Education Programs" (2.4), and "Regional Representation" (2.4). These high ratios suggest that these topics receive more comprehensive treatment in the literature, with multiple references within each source that discuss them.

Conversely, subtopics such as "Beautiful Malino" (4 references from 3 sources) and "Opposition Territory Penetration" (5 references from 3 sources) indicate lower overall attention, suggesting these represent more niche or emerging strategies.

Table 1. Frequency of coding references

Main Nodes	Sub Nodes	Reference	Source
Placement Pattern Bureaucrat	Regional Representation	12	5
	Representation Cluster Family	9	4
	Resolution Conflict Geopolitics	7	5
	Consideration Loyalty Political	10	6

Criteria Selection and Recruitment	Loyalty	15	7
	Discipline and Diligence	8	5
	Compliance with the Rules	11	6
	Strength of Support Base	7	4
Mobilization Electoral	Program Socialization	9	5
	Prioritization of Programs Based on Support	8	4
	Raise Participation Voters	6	4
	Communication Indirect Politics	10	6
Reconciliation Strategy Political		7	3
	Recruitment Gradually	9	5
	Accommodation Group Opposition	5	3
	Penetration of Opposition Areas	6	4
Populist Program	Resolution Conflict Local	12	5
	Education programs	7	4
	Local Economic Protection	8	5
	Distribution Help	4	3

Thematic Map

A thematic map is a visual representation of qualitative data analysis results that illustrates the relationships between the main themes that emerge in the research (Figure 1). This visualization technique organizes and groups the identified themes into a hierarchical structure or an interconnected network, allowing researchers and readers to more easily understand complex patterns within the data. In the context of analyzing the role of district heads (camat) and sub-district heads (lurah) in mobilizing political support, the thematic map presents categories such as bureaucratic placement patterns, selection criteria, electoral mobilization, political reconciliation strategies, and populist programs in a visual format that highlights causal and structural relationships among these components. This helps communicate the research findings more effectively and comprehensively.

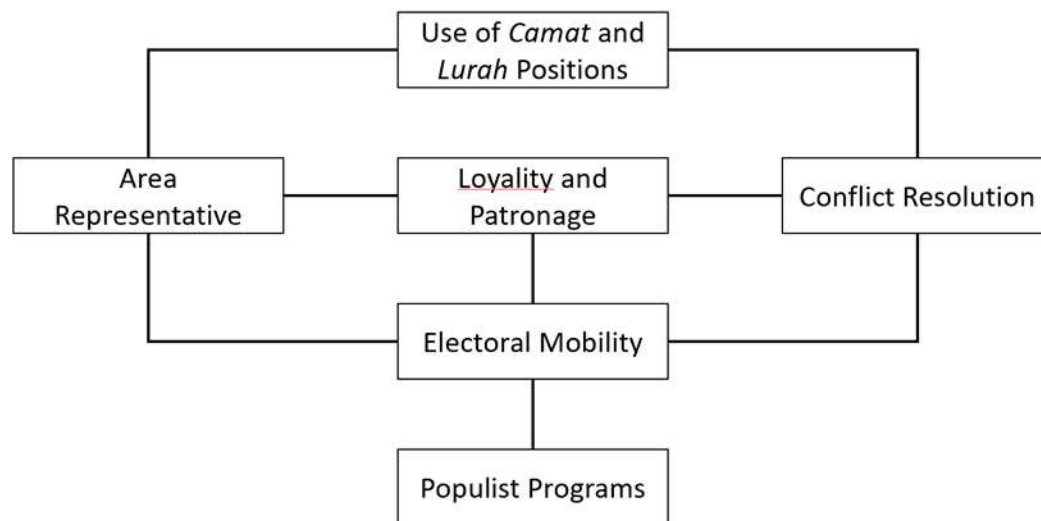


Figure 1. Thematic map of the use of Camat and Lurah positions.

The concept map illustrates the strategic mechanisms employed by the Regent (Bupati) in leveraging the positions of district heads (Camat) and sub-district heads (Lurah) as instruments for consolidating political support. The use of these positions serves as the central node, connected to three key elements: Regional Representation, Loyalty and Patronage, and Conflict Resolution, which collectively support the Regent's political objectives.

Within the dimension of Regional Representation, the Regent positions Camat and Lurah as extensions of their influence across various geographic areas, ensuring the penetration of power down to the micro level. The Loyalty

and Patronage element reflects a vertical relationship constructed by the Regent, where appointments are based on political loyalty within a patron-client framework, ensuring structural compliance in executing political agendas. Meanwhile, the Conflict Resolution aspect places Camat and Lurah as mediators managing potential socio-political friction while also mitigating resistance to the Regent's leadership.

These three elements converge into Electoral Mobility, indicating that the strategic deployment of Camat and Lurah directly contributes to the Regent's capacity to mobilize voter support. These officials act as the engines of grassroots political machinery, consolidating backing and guiding electoral preferences within the community.

Electoral Mobility then culminates in the implementation of Populist Programs, where Camat and Lurah serve as facilitators of initiatives designed to garner public sympathy. These programs function as instruments of legitimacy and as tools to sustain constituent loyalty, while also strengthening the Regent's image as a leader responsive to community needs.

Excerpt by Codes

Bureaucrat Placement Pattern: Regional Representation

"All heads of departments, heads of divisions, and heads of sections are representatives of the 18 districts in Gowa Regency." (Gowa Regent)

"So many representatives of the highlands, so many representatives of the lowlands. That's all I regulate." (Gowa Regent)

"He accommodates all geopolitics. Although it was not conveyed to us, we can read it. In this government too, in the heads of departments, you accommodate all of that." (Head of Dmptpts)

Selection Criteria: Loyalty

"The first is loyal, the second is diligent and disciplined, the third is working according to the rules." (Gowa Regent)

"My capital is, if it's a matter of close people, yes, maybe it's possible. Because I have followed his father for almost 10 years. Including people who are entrusted with trust." (Head of Dmptpts)

Electoral Mobilization: Program Prioritization Based on Support

"I'll give an example of road infrastructure. I paved the road in Gowa. I took that book and called it the holy book in the KPU. That is the number of votes I got in each sub-district environment... So when I made a policy to pave the road where my votes were more than 80% it became the main priority." (Gowa Regent)

"Only the second year that was brought 80% but above 60%. The third year 50%. The fourth year all of them were supporters of Andi Maulusila who did not support me. Because you are not a supporter either." (Gowa Regent)

"So, it's true. Mr. Tupat had said it at that time. There are areas that have never been. Mr. Tupat said it in Kangkang. There are areas where the roads have not been worked on. Because indeed Mr. Atna's electability in that area is very low. It has not become a priority." (Lurah Samata)

Political Reconciliation Strategy: Gradual Recruitment

"The first is that from the first state selection, there were five candidates. One of them was Mrs. Tendri YL, my aunt. So the first group I recruited was in the 2nd year." (Gowa Regent)

"In the 2nd year, I recruited all of Mrs. Tendri's loyalists. Because I considered that what she supported was also the same as Yasin Limpo's family, so they were loyal to Yasin Limpo's family." (Gowa Regent)

"Specifically for Madusila supporters, I recruited them in the 3rd year. I recruited them in the 3rd year because of the preparation for the regional elections again in the next 2 years, which will be held next year." (Gowa Regent)

Populist Program: Education Program

"So, we convey programs related to that context. We convey the sub-district head. Bring the community to convey his success. And these programs. Including the Regency program that we prepared yesterday, one graduate, one sub-district." (Zubair BKPSDM)

"One Quran reader, one sub-district. So, it was discussed there. This was also conveyed. And it seems that the community is happy with this program." (Zubair BKPSDM)

"Well, then besides that, one of the Regent's programs at that time was planned for a scholarship for one sub-district, one person, one sub-district. Scholarship. Scholarship for one person per sub-district." (Lurah Samata)

Word Query Analysis

The study shows the distribution of keyword frequencies along with the number of informants who mentioned them

during the research interview sessions (Table 2). This analysis provides an overview of the dominant themes that emerged during the qualitative data collection process.

Table 2. Word query analysis

Keywords	Frequency	Source
Loyalty/loyal	32	8
Program	45	9
Family/ties	28	7
Education	25	5
Supporter	19	6
Recruit/recruitment	17	5
Camat	31	7
Lurah	29	7
Plateau	15	6
Infrastructure	22	5
Scholarship	14	4
Priority	18	6
Voice	23	5
Conflict	12	5
Kingdom	10	4

Based on the frequency of occurrence, the keyword "program" ranks the highest, mentioned 45 times by 9 informants. The dominance of this keyword indicates that programmatic aspects are the main focus in the informants' narratives, highlighting the importance of program implementation in the studied context. The high number of informants referencing this keyword (9 out of the total participants) further confirms that this theme received broad attention from various perspectives.

The keyword "loyal/loyalty" appeared with a significant frequency (32 times) from 8 informants, illustrating the centrality of loyalty in the dynamics discussed during the interviews. Likewise, "camat" and "lurah" were mentioned 31 and 29 times respectively by 7 informants, emphasizing the crucial role of these two positions within the research context.

Keywords related to kinship factors, such as "family/kinship", appeared 28 times from 7 informants, while sectoral aspects such as "education" were mentioned 25 times by five informants. The electoral dimension is reflected in the keyword "votes" (23 times from 5 informants), and development aspects are indicated through the keyword "infrastructure" (22 times from 5 informants).

Lower but still significant frequencies were observed in keywords like "supporters" (19 times from 6 informants), "priority" (18 times from 6 informants), "recruitment" (17 times from 5 informants), and "highlands" (15 times from 6 informants). Keywords such as "scholarship" (14 times from 4 informants), "conflict" (12 times from 5 informants), and "kingdom" (10 times from 4 informants) complete the spectrum of themes discussed in the interviews.

Relationship Analysis

Relationship Analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that maps the connections and interactions between key concepts in a study. This technique identifies and explores how various themes or phenomena are interrelated, whether causally linked or mutually influential. In research on the role of camat and lurah in the mobilization of political support, relationship analysis reveals several significant interconnections (Figure 2), such as (1) How loyalty influences position placement, indicating that political allegiance plays a crucial role in appointment decisions. (2) How family-based support correlates with electoral mobilization, suggesting that kinship ties can be strategically leveraged to garner votes. (3) How program prioritization is determined by the level of regional support, showing that areas with stronger political backing are more likely to receive targeted development initiatives.

This study illustrates a causal relationship model between various components within a political support mobilization system that involves the bureaucracy, explicitly focusing on the roles of camat (district heads) and lurah (sub-district heads) (Figure 1). The diagram uses a flowchart format with boxes connected by solid lines (indicating direct

relationships) and dashed lines (indicating indirect or correlational relationships). The diagram identifies seven key interrelated components in forming political support: Loyalty, Position Placement, Family Support Base, Electoral Mobilization, Populist Programs, Regent's Electability, Program Prioritization, and Level of Regional Support.

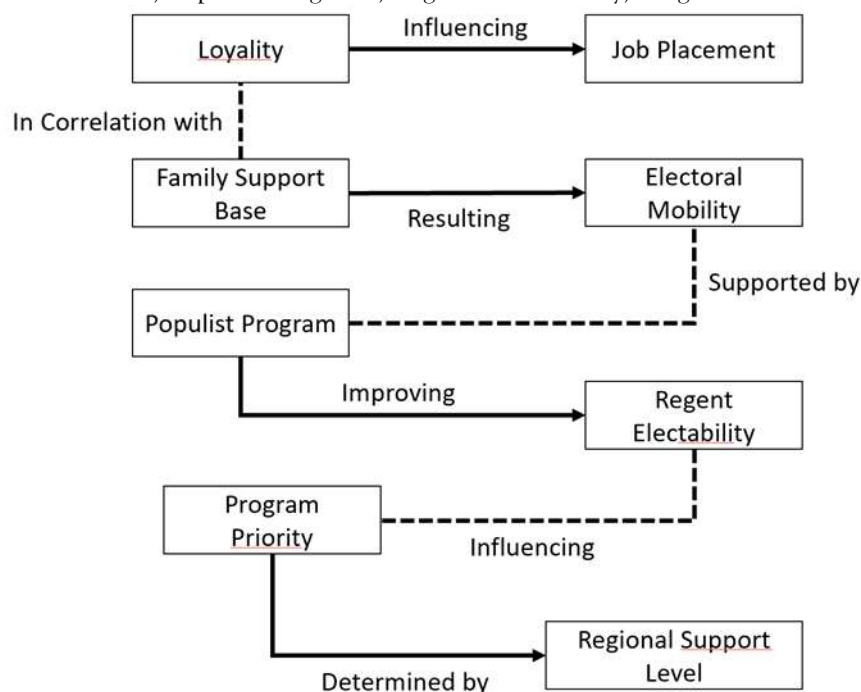


Figure 2. Causal relationship model of political support and bureaucracy.

The causal flow begins with "Loyalty", which directly influences "Position Placement". This indicates that loyalty to the regent is a primary criterion when appointing Camat and Lurah. Also, loyalty correlates with the "Family Support Base," showing how kinship and loyalty often intertwine in local political contexts.

The "Family Support Base" leads to "Electoral Mobilization", indicating that kinship and extended family networks are crucial for mobilizing political support. Electoral mobilization is then supported by "Populist Programs, such as educational initiatives, local economic protection measures, and aid distribution.

On another front, "Program Prioritization" is determined by the "Level of Regional Support", reflecting a phenomenon revealed through interviews: development programs are prioritized for regions that showed strong electoral support for the regent in previous elections.

All components ultimately contribute to the "Regent's Electability". Populist programs directly impact electability, while electoral mobilization and program prioritization affect it indirectly. This diagram confirms a key finding of the study—namely, the existence of an organized system in which political loyalty, family networks, and populist programs are strategically utilized to mobilize political support. The model also depicts a self-reinforcing cycle: regions with high backing receive prioritized programs, which in turn boost the regent's electability, increase loyalty, and perpetuate the cycle.

Overall, the diagram provides a comprehensive overview of how the bureaucracy, especially the roles of Camat and Lurah, is employed as an instrument to consolidate and expand political support, resulting in a significant increase in vote share from 32% in the first term to 91% in the second term.

DISCUSSION

The research findings regarding the use of Camat (district heads) and Lurah (sub-district heads) positions as instruments for mobilizing political support in Gowa Regency reveal the complexity of interactions between bureaucracy and electoral politics in the context of local governance in Indonesia. The main findings show that the positions of Camat and Lurah are strategically utilized through several mechanisms: placement patterns considering regional representation and family networks, loyalty-based selection, electoral mobilization through socialization and program

prioritization, political reconciliation strategies, and the implementation of populist programs. These strategies dramatically increased vote acquisition, from 32% in the first term to 91% in the second term. This section will analyze these findings through four theoretical frameworks: structural-functional, exchange theory, populism, and neo-institutionalism.

Structural-Functional Perspective

The structural-functional theory developed by Talcott Parsons (1951) and Robert K. Merton (1957) emphasizes that society is a complex system of interconnected parts, where each element has a specific function in maintaining the system's balance. In the context of research findings, this perspective provides a framework for understanding how the positions of district heads (camat) and sub-district heads (lurah) function as structural elements within the broader local political system.

The pattern of camat and lurah placement based on territorial representation and family groups, as revealed in the research findings, can be understood as a mechanism to maintain the balance of the socio-political system. The Gowa Regent's statement regarding the representation of 18 districts highlights a systematic effort to ensure that each territorial subsystem is represented in the bureaucracy structure. The findings about considerations of "territorial representation" and distribution between "highland" and "lowland" areas show the application of the principle of functional balance, which helps dampen potential conflicts and maintain overall system cohesion.

Comparative analysis based on the type of position revealing the differentiation of functions between camat and lurah—camat as a conflict mediator and policy communicator, while lurah as a mobilizer of participation and program implementer—reflects what Parsons calls the "functional imperative," where the complexity of social organization demands specialization and division of labor. This pattern is seen in the research findings that show camat focusing more on "conflict resolution & territorial penetration" and "program socialization." At the same time, Lurah is more oriented toward "mobilizing participation" and "local populist programs."

The structural-functional approach also reveals dysfunctions in the bureaucratic system. Merton (1957) introduced the concept of dysfunctions to explain elements in the social structure that disrupt the system's adaptation or adjustment. In this study's context, the politicization of camat and lurah positions can be seen as a dysfunction in the ideal, neutral, and professional modern bureaucratic system. Research findings showing the prioritization of political loyalty over competence indicate a deviation from Weberian bureaucratic ideals emphasizing rationality and professionalism.

The concept map depicting the strategic mechanism of utilizing camat and lurah positions shows how territorial representation, loyalty and patronage, and conflict resolution converge toward electoral mobility and the implementation of populist programs. This map implicitly reflects a structural-functional approach by showing how various elements are interconnected and function to achieve the system's goal: mobilizing political support.

Another critical dimension is the political reconciliation strategy that gradually recruits opposition groups. From a structural-functional perspective, this strategy reduces potential conflict and restores balance to the system. The findings about a more inclusive and accommodating approach in the second term compared to a selective and limited approach in the first term indicate a functional adaptation contributing to system stability.

Merton's concepts of "manifest function" and "latent function" are also relevant in analyzing findings related to indirect political communication. The manifest function of the camat and lurah positions is to run government administration and public services, but the research reveals the latent function of political support mobilization. The indirect political communication strategy demonstrates how the latent function is carried out covertly through the manifest function, creating functional ambiguity that is politically advantageous.

Parsons' AGIL theory (Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, Latency) can also be applied to analyze the research findings. The pattern of placement based on territorial representation and family groups facilitates adaptation to local conditions. Electoral mobilization through program socialization and prioritization based on support helps achieve political goals. The reconciliation strategy through gradual recruitment and accommodation of opposition groups promotes integration. Populist programs that accommodate values such as education and local economic protection maintain cultural patterns (latency).

However, the structural-functional perspective has limitations in explaining the conflictual dimension in the research findings, such as the "territorial penetration of opposition" strategies and "prioritizing programs based on support,"

which show aspects of power contestation. As criticized by conflict theorists such as Dahrendorf (1959), the structural-functional approach tends to ignore power dynamics and exploitation in social interactions.

Exchange Theory Perspective

The social exchange theory developed by Homans (1961), Blau (1964), and Emerson (1976) offers an alternative framework for analyzing the use of camat and lurah positions as instruments of political mobilization. The basic premise of this theory is that social interactions are based on cost-benefit considerations and reciprocity principles, where actors seek to maximize gains and minimize losses in social relationships.

The research findings on the selection criteria for camat and lurah, which emphasize loyalty, discipline, and adherence to rules, can be analyzed as an exchange transaction between the Regent (patron) and the bureaucrats (clients). Informant statements about "loyalty capital" exchanged for important positions illustrate the loyalty-based exchange principle, where long-term loyalty investments are traded for positions within the bureaucracy.

Blau (1964) distinguishes between specific and explicit economic and implicit social exchanges involving non-specific obligations. As revealed in the study, the exchange patterns in the recruitment of camat and lurah show a combination of both. On the one hand, there is an economic exchange dimension in the form of a position with material benefits. On the other hand, there is a dimension of social exchange involving loyalty, support, and kinship networks, which are more implicit and long-term.

The "power-dependence" concept developed by Emerson (1976) is also relevant in analyzing the findings regarding the power relations between the Regent and the camat and lurah. Power in this relationship is asymmetrical, with the Regent controlling valuable resources (positions and programs), while the camat and lurah depend on the Regent for access. This dependency strengthens the Regent's bargaining position to demand loyalty and mobilize political support, as reflected in the selection criteria prioritizing loyalty over other professional qualifications.

The conceptual model depicting the position of camat and lurah as central elements in the political support mobilization system can be analyzed through the exchange perspective. This model shows how placement criteria and territorial/family group representation at the top relate to political mobilization and participation functions on the right and priority development programs at the bottom. This relationship reflects the flow of resource exchange between the Regent, camat, lurah, and the community, where development programs become the main exchange instrument.

The findings about prioritizing programs based on support levels, as revealed in the Regent's statement about road paving in areas with high vote gains, reflect a conditional exchange where the community must first provide political support to receive development program rewards. Likewise, the phased implementation—prioritizing areas with support above 80% in the first year, 60% in the second year, 50% in the third year, and finally, opponents—shows a planned and systematic exchange strategy.

The political reconciliation strategy through the gradual recruitment of political opponents can also be analyzed as a strategic exchange. Gradual recruitment of "all of Tendri's loyalists" and then "supporters of Madusila" represents an exchange offer to opposition groups: positions in the bureaucracy in return for political support. Through this exchange, the Regent successfully co-opted the opposition and expanded the patronage network, as reflected in the dramatic increase in vote gains in the second term.

The exchange theory can also analyze the kinship dimension in the recruitment of camat and lurah. The findings about "family group representation" and "kinship basis" in recruitment patterns, particularly in highland areas and royal families, show how family ties function as social capital in political exchanges. When camat and lurah are selected based on family group representation, they bring along kinship networks that can be mobilized for political support. Populist programs such as education programs, local economic protection, and aid distribution can be understood as exchange instruments with the community. Scholarship programs like "one scholar per sub-district" and "one Quran memorizer per sub-district" represent material exchanges expected to evoke political reciprocity from the beneficiaries. As revealed in statements like "the community is happy with this program," positive community responses confirm the program's effectiveness in generating support.

However, exchange theory is limited in explaining the research findings' values and legitimacy dimensions. Various populist programs are not merely material exchange instruments but also function to build legitimacy and leadership image. Likewise, the political reconciliation strategy involves exchanging positions for support and efforts to create

broader legitimacy through inclusivity and accommodation. These aspects are less captured by the exchange perspective, which tends to be reductionist, reducing social interactions to utilitarian calculations.

Populism Theory Perspective

Populism as a theoretical framework offers a different lens for understanding the use of Camat and Lurah positions in political support mobilization. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) define populism as an ideology that views society as divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups—"the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite"—and argues that politics should express the "volonté générale" (general will) of the people.

The research findings about "Populist Programs," including education programs, local economic protection, aid distribution, and Beautiful Malino, show how the Regent adopts populist strategies to mobilize support. These programs are designed to show allegiance to "ordinary people" and build the image of a leader who is responsive to the needs of the community, aligning with the populist narrative about politics representing the general will of the people.

The focus on educational programs, as revealed in the research findings, highlights an aspect of populism that emphasizes investment in "the future of the people." Programs like "one graduate per sub-district" and "one Quran memorizer per sub-district" reflect populist policies directly addressing grassroots aspirations for social mobility through education. Positive community responses confirm the effectiveness of these populist programs in building support. Local economic protection programs also reflect the economic dimension of populism, emphasizing the protection of local economic actors from external competition. This aligns with the concept of economic populism.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals district heads (Camat) and sub-district heads (Lurah) as instruments for mobilizing political support in Gowa Regency, which successfully increased the incumbent's vote share from 32% to 91%. Six main strategic mechanisms were identified. First, the appointment of Camat and Lurah based on regional representation and family lineage, creating a bureaucratic structure that is territorially and socio-culturally representative. Second, selection based on loyalty as the primary criterion, over technical competence, reflecting patron-client relations in local politics. Third, electoral mobilization through program socialization, prioritization of programs based on support, and indirect political communication, creating an effective "gray zone." Fourth, populist programs (education, protection of the local economy, distribution of aid) should be implemented to foster political loyalty based on tangible benefits. Fifth, political reconciliation is achieved by gradually recruiting the opposition's supporters, co-opting the opposition, and expanding the support base. Sixth, role differentiation between Camat (conflict resolution, territorial penetration) and Lurah (participation mobilization, program implementation). Analyzed through four theoretical perspectives (structural-functional, exchange, populism, neo-institutional), the study shows that although Indonesia has adopted electoral democracy, political practices remain influenced by enduring patterns that have evolved into more subtle mechanisms.

This study contributes to understanding local politics in Indonesia by uncovering the micro-mechanisms of bureaucratic mobilization for political purposes. Despite its limitations (focus on a single regency, elite perspective), the research offers critical insights into how patronage practices have adapted during the democratization era, resulting in a hybrid form that merges formal democratic elements with informal mobilization mechanisms.

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