ANALYSIS OF SPLIT TICKET VOTING IN THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTION IN SIBOLGA CITY

Abdullah Fattah Al Mauludi Lubis [a*)], Tonny P Situmorang [a)] , Bengkel [a)]

[a)] *Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia*

[*)]*Corresponding Author: abdullahfattah5@gmail.com*

Abstract. This study examines the phenomenon of split ticket voting in the 2024 General Election in Sibolga City, where voters cast their ballots for a presidential candidate and a legislative party from different political parties. The objective is to understand the factors influencing this behavior and its relation to local political perceptions. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, using interviews, observations, and documentation as data collection techniques. The data indicate that voters separated their choices based on evaluations of candidate figures and the effectiveness of political performance at both the local and national levels. The findings show that voting behavior is no longer grounded in party loyalty but rather in rational evaluations of differing needs across electoral levels. In conclusion, split ticket voting in Sibolga City represents an expression of political rationality by the community in responding to the complexities of electoral democracy.

Keywords: General Election; Political Perception; Split Ticket Voting

I. INTRODUCTION

The 2024 General Election in Indonesia once again opened space for observing the dynamic patterns of voter behavior, one of which is the phenomenon of split-ticket voting, reflecting the behavior of voters who choose different political parties at various levels of elections [1], [2], [3]. This phenomenon has become increasingly prominent in the city of Sibolga, which has unique socio-political characteristics, marked by growing voter awareness and differentiated political choices based on levels of government [4], [5]. The existence of split-ticket voting is not merely a statistical phenomenon but also impacts patterns of political representation and the effectiveness of legislative work produced through the democratic process [6], [7]. In several polling stations during previous elections, there was concrete evidence that voters tended to cast their ballots for legislative candidates from one party at the city council level, while at the national parliament level (DPR RI) they voted for a different party, reflecting segmented political awareness. This raises important questions about the determinants behind such voting behavior, including perceptions of party performance, candidate figures, as well as the influence of the social environment and mass media [8], [9], [10]. Split-ticket voting has thus become more than just an electoral anomaly; it has transformed into a reflection of the complexity of voter rationality in Indonesia's local democracy [11].

Although global literature on split-ticket voting has developed rapidly, local research in Indonesia, particularly in the context of smaller urban areas such as Sibolga, remains relatively scarce. Previous studies have indeed linked split-

ticket voting to voter rationality factors, such as educational level, emotional closeness to candidates, and perceptions of political parties [12], [13]. However, few have explored the local factors influencing this behavior, such as patronage, kinship, or local political culture [14], [15]. On the other hand, dominant theoretical approaches, such as rational choice theory, often fail to fully explain the complexities occurring on the ground, especially when voters make decisions not only based on rational calculation but also due to social, cultural, and symbolic pressures embedded in community relations [16], [17]. Therefore, studies are needed that not only map voter behavior quantitatively but also delve into the qualitative dimensions within specific local contexts such as Sibolga.

This study aims to analyze the patterns of split-ticket voting in the 2024 General Election in Sibolga, with a focus on how political perceptions, demographic characteristics, and social factors influence voters' tendencies to split their votes across different levels of legislative elections [18], [19]. Furthermore, this research seeks to identify local factors that serve as the primary drivers of split-ticket voting, as well as to evaluate the extent to which such behavior reflects healthy democratic dynamics at the local level [20], [21]. Referring to primary data collected through interviews and questionnaires, and supported by contextual analysis based on previous studies, this research is expected to provide empirical contributions to the development of voter behavior theory, particularly within the context of electoral democracy in Indonesia [22], [23]. The study also aims to provide recommendations for political parties and election organizers in designing campaign

strategies and electoral policies that are more responsive to the complex dynamics of voter behavior [24], [25].

The urgency of this research lies in the need for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of split-ticket voting as part of the dynamics of contemporary electoral politics in Indonesia. Although split-ticket voting is often regarded as an indication of voter political maturity, without in-depth study, this phenomenon could potentially be misinterpreted as inconsistency or even political apathy. Given the research objectives outlined earlier, this study is crucial in filling the gap in the literature on split-ticket voting in small cities such as Sibolga, which has its own complexities in local politics. In addition, the findings of this study are expected to provide new perspectives in examining the interaction between public political perceptions and electoral behavior as reflected in voting choices across different levels of elections. Based on empirical evidence and relevant theoretical approaches, this study offers a strong argument that split-ticket voting is not merely a reflection of individual behavior but also the structural outcome of interactions between voters, political parties, and the prevailing electoral system [26].

Conceptual Definition of Split Ticket Voting

Split-ticket voting refers to voter behavior in which individuals do not consistently choose the same political party across all types of elections within one electoral cycle [27]. In practice, voters may select legislative candidates from one party while simultaneously choosing executive candidates from another. This phenomenon reflects a separation of voter preferences between legislative and executive levels, shaped by various rational, emotional, and even strategic considerations [28].

In the context of a multiparty system such as Indonesia, split-ticket voting demonstrates that voters are not entirely bound ideologically to one party; rather, they are capable of differentiating preferences based on perceptions of candidates or more specific local interests [29]. Voters in this phenomenon are considered more autonomous, not merely influenced by party identity or political patronage, but by their evaluation of candidates' competence and credibility. This concept also suggests that voter behavior is not always homogeneous but reflects rational differentiation in determining political preferences. Therefore, split-ticket voting serves not only as an indicator of the pluralism of voter preferences but also as a symptom of shifting political orientations in society, which is increasingly critical of institutional political performance.

Split-ticket voting can be manifested through several main categories: based on the level of election, voter characteristics, and party strength. First, manifestation by election level occurs when voters support different parties in national and local legislative elections, typically due to differences in perceptions of candidate capabilities at the central versus local levels [30]. Second, in terms of voter characteristics, split-ticket voting is more prevalent among voters with higher levels of education, broader access to information, and greater concern for local issues and candidate quality [31]. In this category, voters tend to adopt evaluative and independent approaches toward each candidate and political party. Third, party strength also influences this phenomenon. In multiparty

systems such as Indonesia, voters often feel that no single party can fully meet all their political expectations, prompting them to split their votes as a form of political strategy [32].

The manifestations of split-ticket voting illustrate the complexity of voter behavior and require political parties to adopt more contextual and personalized approaches in attracting electoral support. This makes split-ticket voting an important indicator in the analysis of contemporary voter behavior.

Conceptual Definition of Political Perception

Political perception refers to the way individuals interpret and evaluate various political information they receive, whether through media, personal experience, or interpersonal communication. This perception plays an important role in shaping a person's attitudes, beliefs, and political behavior, including decision-making in elections [33]. Political perception is not entirely objective, as it is strongly influenced by cognitive biases, emotions, and the sociocultural background of voters. For instance, two individuals exposed to the same political information may interpret it differently depending on their ideology, educational level, and prior political experiences. In the context of electoral democracy, political perception becomes highly significant because it can influence how voters understand issues, assess candidate credibility, and evaluate the performance of political parties. Therefore, political perception is a key variable in voter behavior studies, as it helps explain differences in political choices despite the availability of similar information. Moreover, perceptions can also be manipulated by political elites through campaign strategies and media framing, which indirectly shape dominant narratives in voters' minds. Thus, understanding political perception means understanding the psychological dynamics that underlie individual political choices.

Categorization of Political Perception

Political perception can be categorized into several forms of manifestation, including perceptions of political actors, political institutions, public policy issues, and the electoral process. First, perception of political actors refers to how voters view the image, integrity, and capability of particular candidates or political figures, which are usually shaped through media interactions and prior experiences [34]. Second, perception of political institutions encompasses the level of public trust in bodies such as the Election Commission (KPU), parliament (DPR), political parties, or local government. Third, perception of public issues involves assessments of policies promoted by parties or candidates, such as those related to the economy, education, or social welfare. Fourth, perception of the electoral process reflects the extent to which citizens believe that elections are conducted fairly and free of fraud. All these manifestations are strongly influenced by mass media, political literacy, and personal experience. For example, voters with negative perceptions of party integrity may engage in split-ticket voting as a form of symbolic protest [35].

This categorization shows that political perception is neither singular nor linear but multidimensional, reflecting the

complexity of the relationship between voters and the existing political system.

The Concept of Elections

Elections are a formal mechanism within the democratic system for selecting representatives and executive leaders through citizen participation in voting. From a theoretical perspective, elections are regarded as a manifestation of popular sovereignty, in which the people have the right to determine the direction of policies and governance through directly elected representatives [36].

Elections also function as a means of political accountability, as they allow citizens to evaluate and replace leaders who are incompetent or fail to meet public aspirations. In the context of developing countries such as Indonesia, elections are not merely instruments of democracy but also serve as arenas of intense power contestation, often accompanied by practices of electoral pragmatism. Therefore, elections cannot be understood solely as technical activities but must also be seen as political processes that reflect power dynamics, elite competition, and citizen participation. Furthermore, elections serve as an important indicator in assessing the quality of democracy in a country, which can be measured by the level of participation, transparency, and fairness in their implementation.

Manifestations and Categorizations of Elections

The manifestations of elections can be observed in three main categories: the type of election, voter behavior, and the electoral system. First, the type of election includes legislative, executive, and regional head elections, each with its own political dynamics and distinct characteristics of participation [37], [38].

Second, voter behavior in elections can be divided into loyalist voters, swing voters, and split-ticket voters, each reflecting the complexity of political preferences within society. Third, the electoral system in use whether proportional, district-based, or mixed significantly influences campaign strategies, candidate recruitment, and vote distribution. The manifestations of elections can also be seen from an institutional perspective, such as the involvement of the Election Commission (KPU) and the Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) in ensuring the integrity of the process. In addition, the influence of media, money, and identity politics demonstrates that elections in Indonesia are not entirely neutral processes but are laden with political interests and strategies. Thus, understanding elections means understanding the complex network between law, political culture, and the structure of power in a democratic society.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

The object of this study is the phenomenon of split ticket voting that occurred in the 2024 General Election in Sibolga City, North Sumatra. This phenomenon emerged from the discrepancy between citizens' choices for presidential candidates and their choices for political parties in the legislative election. At several polling stations, evidence showed that the presidential candidate pair from the Koalisi Indonesia Maju, namely Prabowo-Gibran, received the highest votes, even though their main supporting party did not dominate the legislative results. Conversely, the NasDem Party won the most seats in the Sibolga City DPRD, despite its presidential candidate suffering a heavy defeat in the region. This contrasting behavior becomes an interesting subject for analysis, as it reflects dual political considerations made by voters both based on trust in individual candidates and affiliation with political parties. This research does not merely describe the dual-voting phenomenon but also seeks to uncover the social and political dimensions influencing it contextually within the local scope. By placing split ticket voting as the primary focus, this study explores the dynamics of voter rationality in navigating two parallel yet interrelated electoral choices.

This study employs a descriptive qualitative design with an approach emphasizing an understanding of the meanings and subjective perspectives of voters within the context of electoral behavior [39]. The qualitative method was chosen to explore socio-political phenomena more deeply through direct interaction between the researcher and the research subjects [40]. This approach allows the researcher to capture complex dynamics that cannot be measured quantitatively, such as voter motives, perceptions, and political reasoning in Sibolga City. The data consists of two types: primary and secondary. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants, including active voters, local political observers, and election organizers. Secondary data were obtained from official documents of the General Election Commission (KPU), the 2024 election results, scholarly articles, and other relevant literature supporting the interpretation of findings. This method allows data triangulation to ensure the validity and accuracy of the collected information. The choice of method was also based on the complexity of local political behavior, which requires deep contextual understanding and narrative social interpretation.

The main sources of data in this study were key informants, namely voters who consciously engaged in split ticket voting, as well as community leaders and election organizers with knowledge of local political dynamics. Informants were selected purposively, considering their capacity to provide in-depth information about voter motives, preferences, and reasoning. These sources were crucial as they provided direct narratives regarding the rationale behind voters' decisions to differentiate between presidential and legislative party choices. In addition, data were collected through direct field observations, particularly during campaign periods and election day, to directly capture political interactions and community preferences. Secondary data were obtained from official documents of the Sibolga City KPU, including the permanent voter list (DPT), vote counts, and technical records of the election's implementation. Furthermore, the researcher referred to news documentation, political party archives, and scholarly publications related to split ticket voting and voter behavior in Indonesia. The combination of these various sources aimed to provide a comprehensive and contextual description of voter behavior in the 2024 Sibolga General Election.

The research process was carried out systematically, starting from problem formulation, data collection, data analysis, to conclusion drawing. The main data collection technique was in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face with key informants to obtain detailed and reflective information on the motives behind split ticket voting. In addition to interviews, the researcher also conducted participant observation, particularly during campaign periods and election day, to directly capture political dynamics. Documentation was employed to record physical evidence such as campaign banners, social media records, and relevant reports from local media. The initial stage began with mapping potential informants, followed by preparing an interview guide based on research indicators. Once data were collected, transcription and thematic classification were conducted. Each piece of data was then compared and verified using source and method triangulation techniques to ensure high validity and reliability. This process lasted for approximately two months, considering the campaign and post-election periods to obtain actual and contextual data.

The data analysis technique employed in this study was the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher filtered relevant information from interviews and observations, classifying them into themes aligned with the research focus [41]. This reduction was conducted selectively based on indicators such as voter preferences, perceptions of candidates, and party affiliation. The next stage was data display, where information was organized into narratives and categorization tables to clarify patterns and relationships between data. This process was supported by the use of simple qualitative data processing tools, such as Microsoft Excel for thematic tabulation. The final stage was verification and conclusion drawing, carried out iteratively by cross-checking the alignment between the data collected, theory, and research objectives. The validity of the analysis results was ensured by cross-checking among informants and reviewing field notes and documentation. Through this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive depiction of the dynamics of voter behavior in split ticket voting in Sibolga City.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of Split Ticket Voting Data

The phenomenon of split ticket voting in the 2024 General Election in Sibolga City was clearly identified through the differing patterns of voter choices in the two simultaneous elections: the presidential election and the legislative election. The vote recapitulation data showed that the presidential candidate pair Prabowo–Gibran won the majority of votes in almost all districts (kelurahan) in Sibolga City. However, at the same time, the largest share of votes in the city council (DPRD Kota) legislative election was obtained by the NasDem Party, a party that did not support the Prabowo-Gibran ticket. For example, in Aek Muara Pinang District, the Prabowo-Gibran pair received 2,153 votes, while in the same area, the NasDem Party secured 1,824 votes for the DPRD election, far surpassing Prabowo's supporting parties. This discrepancy consistently appeared across various polling stations, indicating a tendency among voters to separate their political preferences between the two different elections. Voters tended to evaluate presidential candidates on a personal basis, while for legislative elections, they considered the track record and proximity of political parties to local issues. This phenomenon confirms that split ticket voting is not an anomaly, but rather a recurring and structured pattern.

In-depth interviews with voters revealed that the decision to engage in split ticket voting was based on individual rationality regarding candidate performance and personal attributes. The majority of informants stated that they voted for Prabowo because of his perceived decisiveness and military background, which they considered suitable for national leadership. However, in the legislative election, their votes went to the NasDem Party because of the presence of local figures from the party who were seen as more approachable and responsive to community needs. For instance, one informant explained that he voted for Prabowo due to confidence in his national leadership, but chose a legislative candidate from NasDem because the candidate was known to be active in the neighborhood and often provided social assistance. Such patterns demonstrate that Sibolga voters possess a high degree of political selectivity, where national and local orientations are placed within different frames of interest. This phenomenon also illustrates a growing political awareness that allows voters not to be entirely bound to a single party across all levels of election, but instead to adjust their choices according to context and needs.

The Relationship Between Split Ticket Voting and the Research Problem

The findings on split ticket voting are directly related to the main issue addressed in this study, namely the inconsistency of voter political choices in two elections held simultaneously. Both the empirical data and the narrative explanations from informants affirm that this phenomenon does not arise from voter confusion, but rather from a higher level of discernment in distinguishing representation at the national and local levels. This indicates that voters in Sibolga City possess a complex electoral mindset that is not solely based on party loyalty. Therefore, split ticket voting should not be viewed as a deviation from rational voter behavior but as an expression of political independence and adaptability to local and national socio-political dynamics. At the same time, it highlights the importance of understanding electoral behavior by taking into account the differentiated political arenas that voters confront simultaneously.

Description of Political Perception Data

Political perception is one of the main determinants in voters' decisions in Sibolga City to engage in split ticket voting. Interview results show that most voters hold different perceptions of political institutions and actors at the national and local levels. For instance, Prabowo is regarded as a symbol of national stability and a solution to global

challenges, while his supporting party is perceived as having little influence in addressing local issues. Conversely, the NasDem Party is seen by many voters as being more tangibly involved in everyday community life, particularly in providing social assistance, developing public facilities, and organizing community activities. In this context, perceptions of emotional closeness, candidate performance, and track record are the key elements shaping political decisions. Positive perceptions of local legislative candidates are stronger than those of their national parties, indicating that in the legislative election context, personal proximity and local relevance carry greater weight in voters' perceptions.

Table 1. Results of the 2019 General Election in Sibolga City

THE ACQUISITION OF VALID VOTES FOR PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES PARTICIPATING IN THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN SIBOLGA

Name of Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidates	Suara
Ir. H. JOKO WIDODO	29.796
Prof. Dr. H. Cj KH. MA'RUF AMIN	
H. PRABOWO SUBIANTO	20.888
H. SANDIAGA SALAHUDDIN UNO	
Total Vote	50.684

In-depth analysis reveals that voters' political perceptions are shaped through the interaction of direct experiences, media exposure, and community narratives. Informants stated that their perception of Prabowo was largely shaped by national news coverage and media portrayal, while their perception of legislative candidates was shaped by direct experiences in local social activities. For example, one voter admitted to choosing a candidate from the NasDem Party because they frequently saw the candidate participating in religious events and assisting local residents, even though the voter paid little attention to the party's national standing. This indicates that political perceptions are not merely ideological but are highly contextual, shaped by social interactions and local community values. In this regard, voters tend to adopt different perceptions for two separate political arenas based on relevance and closeness to their daily lives. In other words, these differing perceptions serve as the psychological and social justification for voters to split their political choices.

The Relationship Between Political Perception and the Research Problem

The relationship between political perception and split ticket voting is very close, as perception serves as the primary basis for voters in making different choices across two types of elections. The central issue examined in this research namely the inconsistency in voting behavior becomes rational when viewed from the differing perceptions voters hold toward political institutions and actors. Perceptions of the effectiveness of national leaders do not necessarily influence perceptions of political parties at the local level, and vice versa. Therefore, this gap provides voters with the space to consciously and deliberately practice split ticket voting. These findings also challenge the assumption that Indonesian voters behave passively or emotionally; instead, they demonstrate that voters use political perception as an evaluative instrument to differentiate preferences based on national and local priorities. Thus, in this case, split ticket voting is better understood as a reflection of rational and adaptive political preference articulation in response to the complexities of the political system.

Based on the results of the interview above, the public assesses that the presidential candidate Mr. Prabowo Subianto's partner, namely Gibran Rakabuming Raka, is not separated because of the involvement of Former President Jokowi as his father, Gibran Rakabuming Raka's vice presidential candidate.

The involvement became an influence and had an impact on the elections in the 2024 elections, especially in the city of sibolga, president Jokowi was also a former president in the 2014-2019 and 2019-2024 terms, the influence of former president Jokowi was also a successful victory of the elected president Mr. Prabowo subianto and the elected vice president Mr. Gibran Rakabuming Raka.

Figure 1. Former President's support with his son

Description of Election Data

In the context of the 2024 General Election in Sibolga City, the electoral process proceeded with relatively high voter participation and minimal significant violations. Data indicate that voter turnout exceeded 78%, reflecting strong public enthusiasm for the democratic process. Nevertheless, the election also revealed split preferences across different levels of contestation, as shown by the inconsistent results between candidates and political parties. The campaign process was intensive, with social media dominating as the primary channel of political communication. Local legislative candidates were more active in engaging directly with

communities through grassroots activities, while presidential campaigns were primarily concentrated in national media. This phenomenon influenced voting patterns, as voters practically differentiated between political arenas. Although the election process was standardized by regulations, in practice, each type of election was perceived and responded to by voters in different ways.

The conduct of the election in Sibolga City demonstrates that the simultaneity of elections does not necessarily result in consistent political choices. Information received by voters from the two different levels of elections was often fragmented. For example, legislative campaigns were conducted personally through face-to-face interactions and social networks, whereas presidential campaigns were massive and abstract. This disparity affected how voters evaluated candidates, leading them to split their votes between presidential and legislative contests. Interview findings revealed that voters felt emotionally closer to legislative candidates they knew personally. In this process, elections were not only a democratic procedure but also a highly local social interaction arena. The difference in campaign strategies proved decisive in shaping split ticket voting behavior, showing that the structure of electoral implementation significantly influences voter mindsets and actions.

The Relationship Between Elections and the Research Problem

The relationship between the electoral structure and split ticket voting behavior lies in the differences in perception and access to information that voters receive from the two types of elections. This study shows that the complexity of the electoral system, both in terms of technical implementation and campaign approaches, contributes to the emergence of dual political choices. This phenomenon does not occur randomly but rather as a result of differing logics in interpreting the two electoral arenas. Thus, the reality of election implementation in Sibolga City becomes an important context for understanding why split ticket voting occurs and what drives voters to make different decisions. This phenomenon demonstrates that a simultaneous election design does not automatically encourage homogeneity of choices, but instead creates space for voters to adjust their preferences according to the political arena they face.

Figure 2. Prabowo takes action against wrongdoing cadres

Figure 3. Free Meal Program

From Figure 3 and based on the results of the interviews above that the Free Meal Program is favored by the people of Sibolga City, a program that is very beneficial for parents, especially in Sibolga City, this program will provide equity for students in each school. However, the free meal program can also provide nutrition and nutrition to students in maintaining a healthy diet provided by the government. Therefore, the free meal program is also a superior program designed by the presidential and vice presidential candidate program, but this is not only to convey an idea in the media in the presidential and vice presidential candidate debate, but must be actualized in campaigning for each Gerindra Party in the district / city, especially in the city of Sibolga,

Summary of Research Results

This study shows that the phenomenon of split ticket voting in the 2024 General Election in Sibolga City occurred as a result of the complex interplay of sociological and psychological factors among voters. It was found that voter preferences are no longer linear toward a particular political party, but rather fluid and influenced by perceptions of candidates, personal qualities, and local electoral dynamics. Political perceptions of the community also indicated a tendency toward pragmatism in selecting different parties for legislative and executive positions. On the other hand, understanding of the political system and party performance did not always serve as the primary consideration. These findings suggest that voter behavior in Sibolga City is increasingly autonomous and independent in determining political choices.

Table 2. Determination of Seats Acquisition of Political Parties Participating in the General Election of Members of the Regional House of Representatives of Sibolga City

No	Party	Vote Acquisition	Seat Acquisition
1	Partai NasDem	18.726	8
2	Partai Gerindra	8.689	3
3	Partai Golkar	8.277	4
4	PDIP	6.167	2
5	Partai Demokrat	4.277	1
6	PKS	1.887	1
7	PBB	1.627	1

From the results in Table 2, the presidential candidate pair Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming won with 32,940

votes, while their rivals lost, with candidate pair number 01 Anies-Amin gaining 15,489 votes and candidate pair number 03 Ganjar-Mahfud obtaining 5,784 votes.

Based on the table of votes for political parties and DPRD seats, the total number of votes was 52,930 with 20 DPRD seats. According to PKPU Regulation No. 6 of 2023, there are 20 DPRD seats in Sibolga, which are distributed across constituencies covering 4 districts. In total, the DPRD seats in Sibolga are only 20, spread across 2 constituencies within 4 districts.

The results for political parties and DPRD seats in Sibolga show that the NasDem Party ranked first, winning 18,726 votes and 8 DPRD seats. In second place was Golkar Party, with 8,277 votes and 4 DPRD seats. The third position was held by the Gerindra Party, with 8,689 votes and 3 DPRD seats. The fourth was the PDIP, securing 6,167 votes and 2 DPRD seats.

The victory of the NasDem Party in Sibolga, with 18,726 votes and 8 city council seats, reflected the trust of the community in allowing their voices to be represented through this party. The success of NasDem legislative candidates cannot be separated from their efforts, as public evaluation was not biased but based on the proven and concrete work carried out by NasDem legislators in representing the people of Sibolga. Moreover, many of the NasDem legislative candidates were individuals with an educational background.

Educated individuals are those capable of critical thinking and providing proper solutions. The people of Sibolga also considered the educational background of legislative candidates, particularly those who won the majority of seats. This was reinforced by an interview with Mr. Fauzan, a Sibolga resident, who expressed his perception in choosing legislators:

"For the legislative candidates, I chose from the NasDem Party because of their performance in 2019, which brought many positive changes to this region. They were also responsible for what they promised during the campaign, so I believe that the NasDem Party is made up of educated individuals, as they have the knowledge to translate into programs that will help us."

Relationship with Previous Research

The findings of this study reinforce earlier research by Bromo et al., (2025), which stated that split ticket voting can be triggered by strategic motives and interest in local issues rather than mere party loyalty [42]. However, compared to the study of Arifin et al., (2025), which emphasized the "low information" model of voters in the Kebumen context, this research shows that voters in Sibolga tend to engage in political rationalization based on social context and candidate performance, rather than simply a lack of information [43]. This indicates that Sibolga voters have distinctive characteristics in political decision-making, highlighting the significance of locality in electoral behavior.

Figure 4. Gerindra Party DPC Chair Campaign

The victory of Mr. Prabowo Subianto as President of the Republic of Indonesia has been trusted by the people of Sibolga City, the victory obtained 32,940 votes from the people of Sibolga City without any interference from any party, the community is free to choose who the candidate is because it is based on individual rights and judgment, but from that also the perception of the people of Sibolga City choosing the President and legislature is different, this is reinforced by Ansyar Afandi Paranginangin as Chairman of the Sibolga City Parliament in seeing people who do Split Ticket Voting:

"We realize that the future political interests of both Mr. Prabowo himself and Nasdem themselves have different candidates for the presidential candidate. But when we ask the public, we in Nasdem also have a survey we ask the public, indeed the public wants a firm presidential figure. Which is where this figure is answered. At the time of the election, it was Mr. Prabowo Sibianto. So we do not regret it, because they have their own interests, from national political interests to local political interests".

Based on the results of the interviews above, the people of Sibolga City conducted Split Ticket Voting where people voted for candidates from different parties, but not to be forced to vote for candidates with the same party because the interests of national politics are different from local political interests.

Reflection on Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to identify the patterns and motivations behind split ticket voting in Sibolga City and its relation to political perceptions. Reflections on the findings reveal that voters are now more critical and no longer rely on party loyalty as the dominant factor. This tendency is important as it demonstrates a transformation of political participation based on personal evaluation of candidates and the effectiveness of their programs. In other words, the public is increasingly aware that they have control over their political choices and are not confined by rigid party patronage or ideology. Thus, this study underscores the

importance of understanding voter behavior in local contexts and its constantly evolving dynamics.

Research Implications

The implications of this study are the need for political parties and election organizers to reform campaign strategies and political communication. If the phenomenon of split ticket voting continues to grow, campaign approaches centered on party symbolism must shift toward strategies that emphasize candidate quality and the local relevance of political programs. This is crucial to ensure that the electoral process does not lose legitimacy and remains effective in bridging public aspirations. On the other hand, these findings also signal to political researchers and policymakers that voter patterns in regions like Sibolga may serve as early indicators of a broader national shift toward more rational and personalistic voting behavior.

Figure 5. Prabowo's performance is recognized by the public

Based on the results of the interviews, Mr. Prabowo Subianto was considered to have a gracious and magnanimous attitude in accepting his defeat in the presidential election, as he chose to join the cabinet led by President Joko Widodo. Mr. Prabowo was entrusted with the position of Minister of Defense, which became strong evidence of his dedication and performance in the responsibilities assigned to him.

His achievements as Minister of Defense were highly remembered by the public, as his contributions were seen as significant for the Republic of Indonesia. Moreover, Mr. Prabowo was also recognized for his concern toward Palestine, which at the time was facing military conflict with Israel. He personally contributed financial assistance from his own resources to support the Palestinian cause.

The people of Sibolga City perceived Mr. Prabowo as highly suitable to become president. During the presidential and vice-presidential debates, Mr. Prabowo presented an outstanding program for the Indonesian people. This program, particularly noted by the people of Sibolga, emphasized prioritizing the welfare of the citizens rather than serving individual or group interests.

Analysis of Why the Results Turned Out This Way

The occurrence of split ticket voting in the Sibolga context is very likely due to voters' differentiated perceptions of legislative and executive performance. Voters recognize that not all representatives from the same party can deliver equally at different levels of government. As a result, they tend to separate their choices based on individuals rather than party identity. This is reinforced by the weak ideological foundations of political parties in Indonesia, which make it difficult for voters to distinguish between party platforms in substantive terms. Consequently, voters rely on direct experience and evaluations of individual candidates, as also discussed by Taden et al., (2025) in her study on implicit incentives in split ticket voting [44].

Recommended Actions Based on Findings

Based on these findings, actions that need to be taken include strengthening civic political education so that voter decisions in split ticket voting are truly based on objective evaluations of candidates' visions, missions, and track records. In addition, political parties need to strengthen cadre building and internal transparency to present credible and high-quality candidates. The KPU (Election Commission) and Bawaslu (Election Supervisory Body) are also expected to optimize election outreach using data-driven local approaches so that voters not only have the freedom to choose but also a strong informational basis for making their decisions. This approach would close the gap for political manipulation and encourage the emergence of substantive democracy at the local level.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The most striking finding of this study is that the split ticket voting behavior observed in the 2024 General Election in Sibolga City was not merely an expression of voter confusion or inconsistency, but rather a representation of maturity and discernment in determining political direction. Voters consciously separated their preferences between presidential and legislative candidates, not due to emotional influence or external pressure, but because of rational evaluations of the figures and track records of candidates at each level. Even in a region often assumed to have strong patronage ties, this phenomenon demonstrates that electoral rationality can flourish when political information and social interactions are actively present. This serves as a strong indicator that local-level electoral democracy is moving toward a more substantive form, grounded in reflective choices.

This study makes significant contributions, both theoretically and practically, to the understanding of voter political behavior in Indonesia. Theoretically, it enriches the study of voter behavior by introducing a new dimension: viewing split ticket voting as a form of political rationality rather than an electoral anomaly. This finding broadens the scope of political behavior approaches, which have often relied heavily on models of party loyalty or collective identity. Practically, the research results can serve as a reference for political parties, election organizers, and political analysts in designing campaign strategies that are more personal, contextual, and responsive to local voter needs. By recognizing that voters are able to separate national and local interests simultaneously, future political communication

strategies must adapt to this increasingly complex electoral mindset.

Although this study has successfully achieved its objectives and provided a comprehensive account of the split ticket voting phenomenon in Sibolga City, its scope remains limited to a single region and one electoral moment. This is not a weakness but rather a contextual boundary that opens opportunities for broader exploration. Future research could be conducted comparatively across regions with different socio-political characteristics, or through quantitative approaches to systematically measure the variables influencing voter choices. Furthermore, integrating perspectives from political psychology and mass communication would enrich the understanding of how voters form perceptions and political decisions within the increasingly complex simultaneous election system. Thus, this study lays the groundwork for deeper and more multidisciplinary research agendas in the future.

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