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Poverty, Local Government Performance, and Voting Behavior: An Approach Econometrics to Performance Evaluation in Election District Head

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between household poverty status, satisfaction with incumbent government performance, and voters' decisions to re-elect the incumbent local government leader in Belu Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. The study employed a quantitative research design using a survey approach. Data were collected from 273 respondents selected through multistage random sampling. The variables consisted of household poverty status and satisfaction with incumbent government performance as independent variables, while the decision to re-elect the incumbent served as the dependent variable. All variables were measured using binary categories. Household poverty status was classified based on the applicable poverty threshold, while satisfaction with government performance and electoral preference were categorized according to respondents' survey responses. The data were analyzed using binary logistic regression estimated through the Maximum Likelihood Estimation method in SPSS. The results show that household poverty status was not significantly associated with the decision to re-elect the incumbent ($B = 0.005$, $p = 0.987$, $Exp(B) = 1.005$). In contrast, satisfaction with incumbent government performance had a positive and statistically significant association with electoral preference ($B = 3.009$, $p < 0.001$, $Exp(B) = 20.269$). Respondents who were satisfied with the incumbent's performance had substantially higher odds of supporting the incumbent's re-election than those who were not satisfied. The findings suggest that voters' evaluations of government performance were more strongly associated with electoral support than household poverty status. Therefore, economic disadvantage did not appear to independently weaken performance-based electoral accountability within the estimated model.

Introduction

Fiscal decentralization represents an important institutional and economic reform designed to improve the efficiency of public resource allocation and enhance social welfare by bringing government decision-making closer to local preferences and needs (Luke, 2023; Martinez-Vazquez et al., 2017; Dick-Sagoe, 2020; Wang et al., 2024; Agyemang-Duah et al., 2018). Through decentralization, local governments obtain greater authority to manage public resources and deliver goods and services that directly affect the welfare of households. From an economic perspective, local governments can therefore be understood as agents entrusted with the management of public resources, while citizens function as principals who evaluate government performance through political and electoral mechanisms. The effectiveness of fiscal decentralization consequently depends not only on the capacity of local governments to manage public resources but also on the ability of citizens to hold elected officials accountable for the outcomes of public policies (Setiawan et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2024; Bucci et al. 2024).

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Local elections constitute one of the most important mechanisms through which this accountability relationship can operate (Célérier & Cuenca, 2015; Brinkerhoff & Wetterberg, 2016). Within the political economy literature, electoral competition can be interpreted as an implicit contract between citizens and political incumbents. Voters reward political leaders when government policies generate improvements in welfare and public services and punish them when government performance is perceived to be poor. This perspective is closely associated with performance-based voting, in which electoral decisions are influenced by citizens' assessments of the economic and social outcomes associated with incumbent governments (Asif & Ullah, 2026; Tsai et al., 2026; Iddrisu, 2026). When public policies generate visible and broadly distributed benefits, the probability that an incumbent will receive electoral support is expected to increase. Conversely, ineffective budget management, poor public services, corruption, or inadequate development outcomes may reduce citizens' willingness to re-elect incumbent leaders (Mpembyemungu, 2019; Yahampath et al., 2025; Boateng, 2025).

However, whether voters are able to perform such evaluations effectively may depend on their socioeconomic conditions. Poverty is particularly important in this regard because economic deprivation can influence household priorities, access to information, and dependence on government assistance (Gennetian & Shafir, 2015; Bredvold et al., 2022; Fahad et al., 2023). Households living in poverty may place greater emphasis on immediate material benefits, social assistance, subsidies, and other short-term transfers than on broader or longer-term dimensions of government performance. Such conditions have generated concerns that poverty may weaken the accountability function of elections by encouraging voters to prioritize immediate economic incentives over evaluations of public policy outcomes. In this perspective, electoral behavior in economically disadvantaged communities may be less responsive to government performance and more strongly influenced by material dependence or clientelistic relationships (Grossman & Slough, 2022; Rosset, 2023; Cooperman, 2024).

This argument, however, should not be interpreted as implying that poor households are inherently incapable of making rational political decisions. An alternative perspective in development economics and political economy suggests that poverty changes the economic constraints under which individuals make decisions but does not eliminate their capacity for rational evaluation. Gingrich & Watson (2016) said that, poor households may still evaluate government performance when policy outcomes are tangible, observable, and directly connected to their everyday welfare. Improvements in roads, public facilities, social services, administrative services, and other forms of public provision can provide citizens with concrete information about the effectiveness of local government. Consequently, even voters living under conditions of economic deprivation may distinguish between governments that perform effectively and those that fail to deliver meaningful public benefits (Pildes, 2023; Stutzmann, 2025; Scheiring et al., 2024).

This theoretical debate creates an important empirical question concerning the relationship between poverty and electoral accountability. If poverty substantially weakens voters' capacity to evaluate government performance, the electoral prospects of incumbent leaders should be relatively insensitive to differences in government performance among poor households. Conversely, if voters remain capable of evaluating observable policy outcomes, poverty should not necessarily reduce the influence of government performance on electoral decisions. In such circumstances, citizens may continue to use elections as an accountability mechanism even when they face significant economic constraints (Gingrich & Watson, 2016; Talving, 2017; Wallace, 2016). The distinction is important because it challenges a purely pessimistic interpretation of democracy in poor regions, which assumes that electoral behavior is primarily

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driven by short-term material incentives rather than by assessments of public-sector performance (Bardhan, 2022; McKay et al., 2024; Munck, 2024). The issue is particularly relevant in the context of Indonesia's decentralized political system, where local governments have substantial responsibilities for the provision of public goods and services. The electoral survival of local political leaders may therefore provide an observable indication of whether citizens perceive government performance as satisfactory. Previous studies cited in the manuscript suggest that electoral turnover can be associated with economic performance and the quality of public services, while theoretical contributions on democratic accountability emphasize the capacity of voters to reward or sanction incumbents based on government outcomes. At the same time, political factors such as incumbency advantages, access to political networks, campaign resources, media exposure, and clientelistic exchanges may also influence electoral outcomes (Morales & Belmar, 2022; Chiru, 2025; Graham et al., 2026).

Kabupaten Belu in East Nusa Tenggara provides a relevant empirical setting for examining these competing explanations. The region is characterized by relatively high levels of poverty and substantial dependence on fiscal transfers from the central government, conditions that make the relationship between household welfare, government performance, and electoral behavior particularly important. At the same time, local political competition provides an institutional setting in which citizens can express their evaluations of incumbent government performance through electoral choices. The combination of economic vulnerability and active local political processes makes Belu an appropriate setting for examining whether poverty weakens or preserves the accountability function of local elections (Mboneni, 2023; Chiru, 2025; Graham et al., 2026).

Against this background, this study empirically examines whether household poverty status affects the probability of re-electing an incumbent local government leader and whether satisfaction with incumbent performance influences electoral choice. Using survey data from 273 respondents in Kabupaten Belu and a binary logistic regression model, the study evaluates whether poverty significantly alters electoral support for incumbents while assessing the independent role of perceived government performance. The empirical results show that poverty status does not have a statistically significant effect on the probability of re-electing the incumbent, whereas satisfaction with local government performance has a positive and statistically significant effect. These findings suggest that economic deprivation does not necessarily prevent citizens from evaluating government performance and that electoral mechanisms can continue to function as instruments of political and economic accountability even in relatively poor communities (Ragolane & Malatji, 2024; Abumbe & Owa, 2024; Li & Zheng, 2025).

The study therefore contributes to the political economy literature by shifting the analytical focus from the assumption that poverty necessarily undermines electoral rationality toward an empirical examination of whether poor households actually respond differently to government performance. By investigating the interaction between socioeconomic vulnerability and performance-based electoral choice at the local level, the study provides evidence concerning the capacity of decentralized democratic institutions to generate accountability under conditions of poverty. More broadly, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of local democracy should not be assessed solely from the socioeconomic status of voters, but also from their ability to observe, evaluate, and respond to the outcomes of government policies through electoral mechanisms.

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Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design using a survey approach to examine the relationship between household poverty status, satisfaction with incumbent government performance, and voters' decisions to re-elect the incumbent local government leader. The quantitative approach was selected because the study aims to empirically examine whether household poverty status and perceptions of government performance are associated with voters' electoral decisions. The analysis focuses on the probability that respondents will re-elect the incumbent based on their socioeconomic condition and assessment of government performance.

Study Area and Population

The study was conducted in Belu Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. The population consisted of residents of Belu Regency who were considered capable of assessing the performance of the incumbent local government leader and expressing their electoral preferences. The selection of Belu Regency was relevant to the objectives of this study because the region has relatively high levels of poverty and substantial dependence on government transfers, while local elections provide an important mechanism through which citizens can evaluate government performance and express political preferences.

Sampling Technique and Respondents

The study used a multistage random sampling technique to select respondents from the population of Belu Regency. The sampling process was designed to provide respondents who could provide meaningful assessments of the incumbent government's performance. In addition to the sampling procedure, respondents were required to have completed at least senior secondary education. This requirement was established because the study involved an assessment of government performance and electoral preferences, which required respondents to have sufficient understanding of the political and governmental context. A total of 273 respondents participated in the survey and were included in the empirical analysis.

Data Collection

The study used primary data obtained through a structured survey administered to residents of Belu Regency. The questionnaire collected information regarding respondents' household economic conditions, perceptions of incumbent government performance, and electoral preferences. The information collected was subsequently organized according to the variables used in the empirical analysis. The survey was specifically designed to determine whether respondents considered themselves economically poor, whether they were satisfied with the performance of the incumbent government leader, and whether they would choose to re-elect the incumbent.

Variables and Measurement

The study consisted of two independent variables and one dependent variable. The first independent variable was household poverty status, while the second independent variable was satisfaction with the performance of the incumbent local government leader. The dependent variable was the respondent's decision regarding whether to re-elect the incumbent. All three variables were measured using binary categories to reflect the two possible conditions associated with each variable. This measurement structure was adopted because the primary objective of the study was to examine the probability of an electoral choice between re-electing and not re-electing the incumbent.

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Poverty Status

Household poverty status was used as the first independent variable. It was measured using a binary classification in which respondents classified as poor were assigned to the poor category, while respondents who did not meet the poverty criteria were classified as non-poor. The classification was based on the 2019 poverty line for East Nusa Tenggara Province, which was reported in the study as Rp349,414 per person. For a household consisting of three members, the corresponding household poverty threshold was Rp1,048,242. Households with income below the applicable threshold were therefore categorized as poor.

Satisfaction with Incumbent Government Performance

Satisfaction with incumbent government performance was used as the second independent variable. This variable represents the respondents' assessment of the performance of the incumbent local government leader during the period of government. Respondents who stated that they were satisfied with the incumbent's performance were classified as satisfied, while respondents who stated that they were not satisfied were classified as not satisfied. Respondents who did not provide an answer or expressed uncertainty were also classified as not satisfied. This variable was used to capture citizens' overall evaluation of the incumbent's performance and its relationship with their electoral preferences.

Electoral Preference

The dependent variable in this study was electoral preference toward the incumbent local government leader. Respondents were classified according to whether they intended to re-elect the incumbent or not. Respondents who indicated that they would choose the incumbent again were classified as supporting re-election, whereas respondents who indicated that they would not choose the incumbent again were classified as not supporting re-election. Because the dependent variable contains only two possible outcomes, it was treated as a binary variable in the statistical analysis.

Binary Logistic Regression

Binary logistic regression was employed to examine the relationship between the independent variables and the probability of re-electing the incumbent. This method was selected because the dependent variable represents two possible electoral outcomes, namely re-election and non-re-election. Unlike ordinary linear regression, binary logistic regression is designed to estimate the probability of an event occurring when the outcome variable has two categories. In this study, the event of interest was the respondent's decision to re-elect the incumbent.

The logistic regression model estimates the probability of re-election based on household poverty status and satisfaction with incumbent government performance. The model therefore allows the study to determine whether respondents' economic status is associated with their electoral decisions and whether satisfaction with government performance increases the likelihood of supporting the incumbent. The approach is consistent with the theoretical framework of the study, which considers elections as a mechanism through which citizens can evaluate government performance and provide electoral rewards or sanctions.

Model Estimation

The parameters of the binary logistic regression model were estimated using the Maximum Likelihood Estimation method. This estimation procedure determines the parameter values that provide the best fit between the observed electoral outcomes and the probabilities predicted by the model. The method is appropriate for binary outcome data because it estimates the likelihood of each observed electoral decision based on the explanatory variables included in

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the model. Through this estimation procedure, the study assessed the relationship between poverty status, satisfaction with incumbent government performance, and the probability of re-electing the incumbent. The estimated coefficients were subsequently evaluated based on their direction, statistical significance, and magnitude. This approach allowed the study to determine whether poverty and perceptions of government performance were associated with voters' decisions in the local election.

Data Analysis

The collected survey data were analyzed using SPSS through binary logistic regression. The analysis focused on determining the statistical significance of poverty status and satisfaction with incumbent government performance in explaining respondents' electoral preferences. Statistical significance was assessed using a five percent significance level. A relationship was considered statistically significant when the probability value was below 0.05.

In addition to statistical significance, the results were interpreted using the odds ratio generated by the logistic regression analysis. The odds ratio indicates how the likelihood of re-electing the incumbent changes in relation to each independent variable. An odds ratio greater than one indicates higher odds of supporting the incumbent, while an odds ratio below one indicates lower odds of supporting the incumbent. This interpretation provides a clearer understanding of the practical direction and magnitude of the relationship between the explanatory variables and electoral preference.

Research Model

The empirical analysis was designed to examine two central relationships. The first relationship concerns whether household poverty status affects the probability that voters will re-elect the incumbent. The second concerns whether satisfaction with the incumbent's performance increases the probability of electoral support. By examining these relationships simultaneously through binary logistic regression, the study evaluates whether poverty constitutes a significant factor in electoral decision-making after accounting for citizens' perceptions of government performance.

The methodological approach therefore directly corresponds to the main research objective, namely determining whether poverty weakens performance-based electoral accountability. The results of the regression analysis provide an empirical basis for assessing whether voters in economically disadvantaged households respond differently to incumbent government performance and whether satisfaction with government performance remains an important determinant of electoral support.

Result and Discussion

Inferential statistical analysis was conducted using binary logistic regression to examine the relationship between household poverty status, satisfaction with incumbent government performance, and respondents' decisions to re-elect the incumbent. The dependent variable was electoral preference, which was categorized into two outcomes: support for the re-election of the incumbent and non-support for the re-election of the incumbent. The independent variables included household poverty status and satisfaction with the incumbent government's performance. Statistical significance was assessed at the 5% significance level. The regression coefficient (B) indicates the direction of the relationship, while Exp(B) represents the odds ratio.

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Table 1. Inferential Statistical Results of Binary Logistic Regression

Variable	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	Statistical Interpretation
Household Poverty Status	0.005	0.987	1.005	Not statistically significant
Satisfaction with Incumbent Government Performance	3.009	0.000	20.269	Positive and statistically significant
Constant	-1.543	0.000	0.214	Statistically significant

Source: Authors' calculation using SPSS version 23.

Table 1 presents the results of the binary logistic regression analysis. The findings indicate that the two independent variables produced different inferential statistical results. Household poverty status had a regression coefficient of $B = 0.005$, with a significance value of $p = 0.987$. Since the significance value was greater than the 5% significance level ($0.987 > 0.05$), household poverty status was not statistically significantly associated with respondents' decisions to re-elect the incumbent. The odds ratio for household poverty status was Exp(B) = 1.005. This value is very close to one, indicating that the estimated difference in the odds of supporting the incumbent between poor and non-poor respondents was negligible. Because the relationship was not statistically significant, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that household poverty status influenced electoral preference in the estimated model.

In contrast, satisfaction with incumbent government performance had a regression coefficient of $B = 3.009$, indicating a positive relationship with the decision to re-elect the incumbent. The significance value was $p = 0.000$, which was below the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, satisfaction with incumbent government performance was statistically significantly associated with electoral preference. The odds ratio for satisfaction with incumbent government performance was Exp(B) = 20.269. This result indicates that respondents who were satisfied with the incumbent government's performance had approximately 20.269 times the odds of supporting the re-election of the incumbent compared with respondents who were not satisfied, holding household poverty status constant.

Table 2. Summary of Inferential Statistical Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Sig. Value	Decision Criterion	Result	Interpretation
H1	Household Poverty Status	0.987	$p < 0.05$	Not Supported	Poverty status was not significantly associated with the decision to re-elect the incumbent
H2	Satisfaction with Incumbent Government Performance	0.000	$p < 0.05$	Supported	Satisfaction with government performance was positively and significantly associated with the decision to re-elect the incumbent

Source: Authors' calculation using SPSS version 23.

As shown in Table 2, the first hypothesis was not supported because the significance value for household poverty status was 0.987, which was substantially greater than the established

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significance level of 0.05. Thus, the analysis did not find a statistically significant association between household poverty status and respondents' decisions to re-elect the incumbent. The second hypothesis was supported because satisfaction with incumbent government performance had a significance value of 0.000, which was below 0.05. The positive coefficient of B = 3.009 indicates a positive association, while the odds ratio of 20.269 indicates a substantial difference in the odds of supporting the incumbent between satisfied and non-satisfied respondents.

Table 3. Interpretation of the Odds Ratios

Independent Variable	Exp(B)	Direction	Interpretation
Household Poverty Status	1.005	Positive but negligible	The estimated odds differed by approximately 0.5% between the poverty-status categories; however, the relationship was not statistically significant ($p = 0.987$).
Satisfaction with Incumbent Government Performance	20.269	Positive	Satisfied respondents had approximately 20.269 times the odds of supporting the incumbent's re-election compared with non-satisfied respondents ($p < 0.001$).

Source: Authors' calculation using SPSS version 23.

Table 3 demonstrates that household poverty status had an odds ratio of 1.005, which was almost equal to one. This indicates virtually no substantive difference in the estimated odds of supporting the incumbent based on poverty status. The non-significant p-value further confirms that this relationship was not statistically meaningful.

By contrast, satisfaction with incumbent government performance had an odds ratio of 20.269, indicating a strong positive association with electoral support. Respondents who were satisfied with government performance had substantially higher odds of supporting the re-election of the incumbent.

Household Poverty Status and Electoral Preference

The first finding of this study is that household poverty status was not statistically significantly associated with respondents' decisions to re-elect the incumbent. The estimated regression coefficient was B = 0.005, while the significance value was $p = 0.987$, which was substantially greater than the 5% significance level. Therefore, the analysis did not provide sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that respondents classified as poor differed significantly from respondents classified as non-poor in their likelihood of supporting the incumbent.

The estimated odds ratio of Exp(B) = 1.005 provides further support for this conclusion. An odds ratio close to 1 indicates that the estimated difference in the odds of supporting the incumbent between the two poverty-status categories was extremely small. More specifically, the estimated odds differed by only approximately 0.5%, and this difference was not statistically significant. Consequently, poverty status did not emerge as a meaningful predictor of electoral preference within the binary logistic regression model estimated in this study.

This finding is particularly relevant to the theoretical argument that poverty may weaken electoral accountability. One perspective suggests that economically disadvantaged citizens may place greater emphasis on immediate material benefits, government transfers, subsidies, or other short-term economic considerations. Under such conditions, electoral decisions may potentially become less responsive to broader evaluations of government performance. If this

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mechanism were dominant in the present study, household poverty status would be expected to demonstrate a significant relationship with electoral support for the incumbent.

However, the empirical results do not support such an interpretation. The non-significant result indicates that respondents' classification as poor or non-poor was not, by itself, associated with a statistically meaningful difference in their decision to support the incumbent. This suggests that economic disadvantage did not automatically translate into a distinctive pattern of electoral support or opposition.

One possible interpretation is that citizens experiencing economic hardship may still retain the capacity to evaluate the performance of their local government. Poverty can influence the constraints under which individuals make decisions, but it does not necessarily eliminate their ability to observe government outcomes or assess whether public policies have produced meaningful benefits. Citizens may evaluate visible aspects of government performance, including public services, infrastructure, administrative services, and other government programs that directly affect their daily lives.

The result therefore challenges a deterministic assumption that poor voters necessarily make electoral decisions primarily on the basis of their economic dependence. The findings suggest that poverty should not automatically be treated as a condition that prevents citizens from engaging in performance-based political evaluation. Poor and non-poor respondents may both consider government performance when deciding whether to continue supporting an incumbent.

Nevertheless, the non-significant result should be interpreted carefully. It does not demonstrate that poverty is irrelevant to political behavior in general. The finding only indicates that the particular measure of household poverty status used in this study was not statistically significantly associated with the dependent variable after the other variable in the model, satisfaction with incumbent government performance, was taken into account.

In addition, poverty is a multidimensional condition that may not be fully captured through a binary classification of poor and non-poor households. Economic vulnerability can involve differences in income stability, employment, access to public services, dependence on government assistance, household assets, and other dimensions of socioeconomic well-being. Therefore, the absence of a statistically significant association in the present model should not be generalized to mean that all forms of economic disadvantage have no relationship with electoral behavior.

Overall, the results suggest that household poverty status alone was insufficient to explain respondents' electoral preferences. The decision to support or reject the incumbent appears to involve considerations beyond the simple distinction between poor and non-poor households. This finding creates an important foundation for examining the second explanatory variable, namely satisfaction with incumbent government performance.

Satisfaction with Incumbent Government Performance and Electoral Preference

The second major finding of this study concerns the relationship between satisfaction with incumbent government performance and respondents' decisions to re-elect the incumbent. Unlike household poverty status, satisfaction with government performance showed a strong positive and statistically significant association with electoral preference. The estimated regression coefficient was $B = 3.009$, and the significance value was $p < 0.001$.

The positive coefficient indicates that satisfaction with the incumbent government's performance was associated with higher odds of supporting the incumbent's re-election. This

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result suggests that respondents who evaluated the incumbent government positively were substantially more likely to support the continuation of the incumbent's leadership than respondents who were not satisfied with government performance.

The magnitude of this relationship is reflected in the odds ratio of Exp(B) = 20.269. Holding household poverty status constant, respondents who were satisfied with the performance of the incumbent government had approximately 20.269 times the odds of supporting the re-election of the incumbent compared with respondents who were not satisfied. This represents a substantial difference in the estimated odds of electoral support.

It is important to interpret this result correctly. The value of 20.269 represents an odds ratio, not a direct increase in probability. Therefore, the result should not be interpreted as meaning that satisfied respondents were 20.269 times more likely in terms of probability to vote for the incumbent. Instead, the logistic regression result indicates that satisfaction was associated with substantially higher odds of supporting the incumbent relative to the reference category.

The strong association between satisfaction and electoral support is consistent with the logic of performance-based voting. Under this perspective, voters evaluate the outcomes of government policies and use their electoral choices to reward or sanction political leaders. When citizens perceive that the government has performed satisfactorily, continued electoral support becomes more likely. Conversely, dissatisfaction with government performance may reduce the willingness of citizens to support the incumbent.

The finding suggests that respondents in the study area were responsive to their evaluations of government performance. Their electoral decisions were not merely associated with their socioeconomic classification but were strongly related to whether they were satisfied with the performance of the incumbent government. This indicates that citizens may use information and experiences related to government performance when making electoral decisions.

The relationship between satisfaction and electoral support is also relevant to the concept of retrospective voting. Rather than making decisions exclusively on the basis of future promises, voters may evaluate the performance of the incumbent based on their experiences during the period of government. When the perceived outcomes of government are positive, voters may reward the incumbent by supporting re-election. When performance is evaluated negatively, voters may be less willing to provide continued electoral support.

Therefore, the results indicate that government performance represents an important component of electoral accountability. The strong statistical relationship observed in this study suggests that voters' evaluations of the incumbent government were closely associated with their electoral preferences. The election can consequently function as a mechanism through which citizens express approval or dissatisfaction with the performance of political leaders.

Poverty and the Functioning of Electoral Accountability

When household poverty status and satisfaction with government performance are considered simultaneously, the results provide important insights into the functioning of electoral accountability in economically disadvantaged communities. The poverty variable was not statistically significant, whereas satisfaction with government performance was highly significant and had a substantial odds ratio. This contrast suggests that the evaluation of government performance was more strongly associated with electoral preference than respondents' classification as poor or non-poor.

The findings are relevant to the argument that poverty may weaken democratic accountability by making economically disadvantaged citizens more dependent on immediate material

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benefits. According to this perspective, poor citizens may prioritize short-term assistance over broader evaluations of government performance. If poverty substantially weakened accountability in the present context, a stronger relationship between poverty status and electoral support might be expected.

The empirical findings, however, do not provide evidence that household poverty status independently determined electoral support for the incumbent. Instead, satisfaction with government performance emerged as the variable with a statistically significant association with respondents' electoral preferences. This pattern suggests that economic disadvantage did not necessarily prevent citizens from evaluating the incumbent on the basis of perceived government performance.

The results therefore support a more nuanced understanding of voter behavior in poor communities. Citizens living in economically disadvantaged conditions may face significant material constraints, but they may still distinguish between satisfactory and unsatisfactory government performance. Economic hardship does not necessarily imply an absence of political evaluation or electoral rationality.

This interpretation is particularly relevant in the context of local government. Local governments provide services and implement programs that can have direct and visible consequences for citizens. Improvements or deficiencies in public services may therefore provide voters with information that can be used to evaluate government performance. When citizens perceive these outcomes positively, they may reward the incumbent through electoral support.

The results also suggest that performance-based accountability can potentially operate across different socioeconomic groups. Since poverty status was not significantly associated with electoral preference, there is no evidence from the present model that poor respondents systematically responded differently from non-poor respondents solely because of their poverty classification. Instead, the shared evaluation of government performance may provide a basis for electoral decision-making across socioeconomic categories.

At the same time, the findings do not imply that all poor and non-poor voters evaluate government performance in exactly the same way. The present analysis only indicates that the binary classification of poverty status did not have a statistically significant independent association with the decision to re-elect the incumbent. Individual electoral decisions may still be influenced by diverse personal, social, political, and economic experiences.

Government Performance as a Mechanism of Electoral Reward and Sanction

The strong relationship between satisfaction with government performance and electoral preference indicates that electoral support can function as a form of political reward. Respondents who were satisfied with the performance of the incumbent were substantially more likely, in terms of odds, to support the incumbent's re-election. This suggests that positive evaluations of government performance may translate into political advantages for incumbent leaders.

From an accountability perspective, this relationship creates an incentive structure for elected officials. If citizens reward satisfactory performance with electoral support, political leaders have an incentive to improve public services, implement effective policies, and respond to citizens' needs. Electoral competition may therefore contribute to a system in which political survival is connected, at least partially, to citizens' assessments of government performance.

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Conversely, dissatisfaction can serve as a mechanism of political sanction. Although the present analysis focuses on the association between satisfaction and support for re-election, the results also imply that respondents who were not satisfied with incumbent performance had substantially lower odds of supporting the incumbent than those who were satisfied. Elections therefore provide citizens with an institutional mechanism through which dissatisfaction can potentially be translated into reduced electoral support.

The findings highlight the importance of citizens' subjective evaluations of government performance. Government performance in this study was measured through respondents' satisfaction with the incumbent rather than through objective administrative or economic indicators. Consequently, the results demonstrate the importance of perceived performance in shaping electoral preferences.

This distinction is important because electoral decisions are ultimately made by citizens based on their own assessments and experiences. A government may demonstrate positive outcomes according to administrative indicators, but electoral rewards depend on whether citizens perceive those outcomes as meaningful and satisfactory. Therefore, citizens' perceptions represent an important link between government performance and electoral behavior.

The substantial odds ratio observed in this study indicates that this link was particularly strong in the present sample. Satisfaction with the incumbent government was associated with a large difference in the odds of electoral support. This finding reinforces the importance of performance perception as a potential political resource for incumbent leaders.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between household poverty status, satisfaction with incumbent government performance, and voters' decisions to re-elect the incumbent in Belu Regency. The binary logistic regression results showed that household poverty status was not significantly associated with electoral preference ($B = 0.005$; $p = 0.987$; $Exp(B) = 1.005$), indicating that poor and non-poor respondents did not differ significantly in their support for the incumbent. In contrast, satisfaction with incumbent government performance had a strong positive and statistically significant association with the decision to re-elect the incumbent ($B = 3.009$; $p < 0.001$; $Exp(B) = 20.269$). Respondents who were satisfied with the incumbent's performance had substantially higher odds of supporting the incumbent's re-election than those who were not satisfied. These findings suggest that voters' evaluations of government performance were more strongly associated with electoral preferences than household poverty status. Therefore, within the scope of the variables examined, the results indicate that economic disadvantage does not necessarily weaken performance-based electoral accountability, as citizens may continue to use their assessments of government performance as an important basis for rewarding or withholding support from incumbent leaders.

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