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## The Metro City Election Anomaly: The Incumbent's Failure and the Challenger's Victory

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**Abstract:** Local elections (Pilkada) are an important moment in local democracy, often pitting incumbents against their rivals. However, not all incumbents are able to retain their seats. This study examines the defeat of the incumbent Mayor of Metro in the 2024 Metro local elections. Incumbents in several democratic elections in Indonesia often have a high re-election rate and a good chance of winning the contest. The opposite phenomenon occurred in Metro City, Lampung, where the incumbent, despite successfully becoming a candidate and being supported by the majority of political parties, failed to secure victory, even suffering defeats in all district-level electoral districts. This research uses a qualitative approach, with data collection methods including interviews, observations, and literature reviews. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative data analysis with the stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that there are several factors contributing to the incumbent's failure in the 2024 Metro Mayor Election. First, the educational level of city residents influences their tendencies and satisfaction with the incumbent's performance. Second, public dissatisfaction with the incumbent's leadership. Third, the existing political party machinery was not optimally supporting the incumbent's re-election. Fourth, social media and digital literacy among city residents in responding to campaigns in the digital space.

**Keywords:** democracy, regional elections, Metro City, incumbent

**Abstrak:** Pemilihan kepala daerah (Pilkada) merupakan momen penting dalam demokrasi lokal yang sering kali mempertemukan incumbent dengan para pesaingnya. Namun, tidak semua incumbent mampu mempertahankan kursi mereka. Studi ini mengkaji kekalahan incumbent Wali Kota Metro dalam Pilkada Metro tahun 2024. Incumbent pada beberapa pesta demokrasi pemilu di Indonesia seringkali memiliki tingkat keterpilihan kembali dan peluang besar untuk memenangkan kontestasi. Fenomena sebaliknya terjadi di Kota Metro, Lampung dimana incumbent meski berhasil menjadi calon peserta dan didukung oleh mayoritas partai politik gagal meraih kemenangan, bahkan disemua daerah pemilihan tingkat kecamatan mengalami kekalahan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan wawancara, observasi partisipan, dan studi pustaka. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan analisis data kualitatif dengan tahapan reduksi, penyajian dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Ada beberapa faktor yang menjadi penyebab gagalnya petahana dalam konstestasi pilkada walikota Metro 2024. Pertama, terkait dengan tingkat pendidikan warga kota berpengaruh terhadap kecenderungan dan kepuasan pada kinerja incumbent. Kedua ketidakpuasan masyarakat terhadap kepemimpinan petahana. Ketiga, mesin partai politik yang ada tidak optimal memberikan dukungan untuk pemenangan kembali petahana. Keempat, media sosial dan literasi digital warga kota dalam menyikapi kampanye di ruang digital.

**Kata Kunci:** demokrasi, pemilukada, kota Metro, Petahana

## INTRODUCTION

General elections are a system held in Indonesia through a democratic mechanism in which the people, as voters and holders of the highest sovereignty, directly elect representatives and the head of state (Asshiddiqie, 2021; Romli & Faidi, 2025). General elections in Indonesia are held nationally and are direct, universal, secret, honest, free, and fair (Budiardjo, 2003). Elections aim to prepare and produce representatives in parliament at both the central and regional levels, as well as to elect the President and Vice President, Governors, and Regents/Mayors with good quality and track records (Tjenreng, M B Z, 2016).

Unlike the presidential election, the regional election is a system of elections held in Indonesia to elect regional heads, both at the provincial level for governors and mayors and regents at the city/district level along with their deputies, who are elected directly by the people in a five-yearly event. This system embodies local democracy, further affirming the principle of popular sovereignty, while also representing a political transformation from centralisation to decentralisation (Azfirmawarman et al., 2024). The election of local leaders in Indonesia has undergone a lengthy process with a system that has been continuously improved and transformed in the dynamics and development of democracy as an evaluation of the previous system at both the local and national levels (S et al., 2017). Initially, Pilkada was conducted indirectly through the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), representing the aspirations of its constituents. It later transitioned to direct Pilkada, where the people can directly participate in selecting candidates or nominees in the Pilkada contest (Budiardjo, 2003; Romli & Faidi, 2025). This change in the election system is based on the spirit of democracy, which gives the community the opportunity to play a central role in determining local leadership succession while also contributing to efforts to enhance the political legitimacy of elected leaders at the local level. This undoubtedly brings a breath of fresh air to local political dynamics, as the people are directly involved in the process by casting their votes and expressing their support (Sarbaini, 2020).

Metro City is one of the regions located in Lampung Province, administratively comprising 5 sub-districts with a total of 22 villages (Retno Sari & Karsiwan, 2022). This administrative division was established based on Metro City Regulation No. 25 of 2000 on the Expansion of Villages and Sub-districts in Metro City (Karsiwan et al., 2021, 2022; Pratiwi et al., 2025). The distribution of districts influences spatial planning patterns, population distribution, and the concentration of educational, health, and economic facilities in Metro City. Each sub-district has different characteristics and roles as a supporter of the city's growth centre. Metro City has a population of around 169,940 (2020) with an average density of 2,454 people/km<sup>2</sup>. The most densely populated area is Metro Pusat Sub-district, while the least populated is Metro Selatan. The number of sub-districts, villages, and population are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Administrative Distribution of Subdistricts, Villages and Population

No.	Subdistrict Name	Number of Villages	Population
1.	Central Metro	5	55.740 (31,25%)
2.	East Metro	5	40.968 (22,97%)
3.	South Metro	4	18.353 (10,29)
4.	West Metro	4	29.014 (16,27)
5.	North Metro	4	34.306 (19,23)

Source: Metro City Population Development Profile Book 2023 (Dinas Kependudukan dan Catatan Sipil, 2024)

With a population of nearly 170,000, most residents have primary occupations in the government sector (28.56%), trade (28.18%), agriculture (23.97%), communication and transportation (9.84%), and construction and services (5.63%) (Sarbaini & Erihadiana, 2021). Metro is known as a culturally diverse and pluralistic city, with each ethnic group contributing to the richness of local culture, including customs, language, clothing, and traditional rituals (Firmansyah, 2018). The life of the people of Metro is characterised by pluralistic ethnic groups, with various ethnic groups living together peacefully, respecting each other, and cooperating in a harmonious social environment (Pratiwi et al., 2025; Sari & K Karsiwan, 2024). This includes the smooth and conflict-free conduct of local elections, both for regional heads and council members.

The Metro City Regional Election has the main agenda of electing the mayor and deputy mayor of Metro for the 2024–2029 term, while also reflecting the implementation of democracy at the local level. This election takes place after the 2024 presidential and legislative elections, marking the continuation of the democratisation process in Metro City. The Metro City regional election will be held on 27 November 2024 as part of the simultaneous regional elections throughout Indonesia. The number of registered voters (DPT) has been set at 131,482, with 741 voters with disabilities accommodated by the Metro City KPU.

The phenomenon of incumbent failure in local elections, including in Metro City, has drawn attention in studies on local democracy (Wulandary, 2022). Although incumbents theoretically have advantages such as access to resources, bureaucratic networks, and popularity, in reality, many incumbents fail to retain their positions. Incumbents typically have advantages in terms of public recognition and access to resources (Siregar, 2023). However, in the 2024 Metro Regional Election, incumbent Wahdi Siradjuddin suffered a significant defeat (Azzahra & Karsiwan, 2024). This incident is worth analysing given the importance of the Mayor's position in local government management. Incumbents with a strong party base and solid political networks tend to find it easier to retain their seats. Conversely, if the party base weakens or cannot be effectively mobilised, incumbents are vulnerable to defeat (Lestari & Karsiwan, 2024).

Research on the failure of incumbents to retain power is not a new topic of study. Several similar studies support this research, such as 'Factors Contributing to the Defeat of Incumbents in the 2024 Regional Elections in Padang City' by Ariansyah et al., 2024. The research findings indicate that the incumbent's defeat in the Padang City Regional Election was influenced by several factors, such as the government's failure to improve the welfare of its citizens, the incumbent's overconfidence during the campaign period, the failure of public services during their tenure, and the high unemployment rate over the past five years (Ariansyah et al., 2024). Additionally, there is also research titled *Behind the Incumbent's Defeat: The Political Narrative of Community Negotiation* by Libertus Renaldi in 2021. The research findings indicate that the winning actors in the village head election contest were influenced by several factors, such as a strong family dynasty, community relations, and the strong support of local community leaders (Renaldi, 2021). Furthermore, the support of local figures or the practice of money politics is understood as a form of negotiation by the community due to the absence of public facilities provided by the government that can be enjoyed by all elements of society.

Although previous studies share similarities in analysing the downfall of incumbents in retaining their power, this study has distinct characteristics. The

incumbent mayor of Metro was elected through the previous local election contest and ran as an independent candidate. When he ran again through a political party with the support of the majority of political parties, an anomaly occurred.

### **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach, with data collection techniques during the study using interviews, participatory observation, and literature review (Sugiyono, 2017). Interviews were conducted with community leaders, religious leaders, and residents who have the right to vote (Nasution, 2023). Observations were conducted by observing the implementation of the 2024 Metro City regional election stages, including during the socialisation period, campaign period, quiet week, voting period, and the announcement of election results (Nazir, 2013). Literature review was conducted by examining previous research findings, government media reports, and online media that support the research study (Nasution, 2023).

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative data analysis with the stages of data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Data analysis was conducted continuously until the data quality was deemed sufficient. The next stage involved interpreting the data that had been successfully collected for analysis, resulting in new findings and perspectives. The final stage involved drawing conclusions by examining phenomena at the educational level, city government performance, support and the activities of the political parties supporting each candidate, as well as social media and digital literacy among city residents, which influenced public choice in the dynamics of the 2024 Metro City regional election.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Results**

Metro City is part of the simultaneous regional elections held on 27 November 2024, following the 2024 presidential and legislative elections across Indonesia. Metro City, with a population of approximately 178,381 (BPS Kota Metro, 2023), is conducting elections for Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the 2024–2029 term. In the Metro City regional election, there are two pairs of candidates competing for the mayor and deputy mayor positions: the pair of Bambang Iman Santoso and M. Rafieq Adi Pradana, supported by the Democratic Party, against the incumbent candidates Wahdi and Qomaru Zaman, backed by a large coalition including the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), Gerindra, Golkar, PKS, PAN, PKB, NasDem, PSI, and PPP (Metro City Election Commission, 2024). However, during the election process, the Metro City Election Commission disqualified Qomaru Zaman as a vice-mayoral candidate due to electoral offences that led to his disqualification in the election process. Despite this, the incumbent candidate Wahdi was still allowed to participate in the election without a running mate, and the ballot papers still included Qomaru's photo with a clear notification mechanism for voters at the polling stations.

Overall, the 2024 Metro City Regional Election reflects the complex dynamics of local politics, marked by the disqualification of a running mate, competition between two strong candidates, and the conduct of the election prioritising the principles of direct, universal, free, and secret democracy. As a city known as the 'Land of Sai Wawai,' Metro also saw voter participation of around 74%, reflecting the enthusiasm of the community in determining their local leader (JDIH, 2024). The incumbent's failure was often due to weak internal consolidation and volunteer networks at the grassroots

level. This resulted in an unstable mass base that was easily swayed to support other candidates who were more active in building relationships with the community (Azfirmawarman et al., 2024).

In addition to the above explanation, there are several factors that contributed to the incumbent's defeat in the contest and succession of the regional elections in Metro. Some of these factors are as follows:

**a. Level of Education and the Rationality of Political Choices Among City Residents**

Many previous studies in various regions have shown that higher education makes voters more rational and selective in choosing candidates. They typically consider candidates' track records, programmes, and performance based on current issues rather than emotional factors such as identity or calls for nationalism (Munardin Hadma & Dwi Anggoro, 2021; Siregar, 2023).

Highly educated voters often have greater access to and interest in political information; they follow political news, read analyses, and actively participate in political discussions. This enhances their ability to critically evaluate candidates or parties (Lidya, 2018). The educational level of students positively influences their political preferences, making them more critical, rational, and considering multiple aspects before determining their political stance in elections (Siregar, 2023).

The Metro City government's efforts to establish the city as an educational hub in Lampung Province. This is reflected in the improvement of educational facilities, equitable access to education, and enhanced educational quality as part of the city's development vision (Lidya, 2018; Siregar, 2023). The educational level and political choices of Metro residents are key factors in analysing the incumbent Mayor of Metro's defeat in the 2024 Regional Head Election (Pilkada). In the democratic election held on 27 November 2024, the incumbent pair only secured 39.79% of the vote, compared to the challenger pair's 60.21% (Metro City Election Commission, 2024). This significant defeat in vote share indicates that Metro City, as an educational city in Lampung Province, has successfully educated its residents to choose the best candidate. Educational levels play a significant role in determining residents' political choices in a more honest and rational manner. Individuals with higher education tend to have a more critical political awareness and choose candidates based on clear programmes and visions, rather than merely popularity or patronage (Ariansyah et al., 2024; Dzul Fadli et al., 2018). The high voter turnout of 74.09% in Metro indicates that residents are well-educated and active in local democracy.

**b. Government Performance**

The performance of local governments, such as mayors, is measured by the effectiveness of public services, government transparency, and infrastructure development oriented towards community needs (Dzul Fadli et al., 2018). The level of public satisfaction with the performance of public officials is greatly influenced by intensive communication with citizens, transparency in policy, and success in resolving urban issues such as infrastructure and public services.

The Metro City Government, during the 2019-2024 period, focused on improving the quality of human resources, developing education, health, and community welfare (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021). Through the preparation of annual performance reports, the city government strives to ensure regular and continuous performance evaluations

through programme and service improvements to achieve the region's long-term development goals and objectives (RLPPD Kota Metro, 2024) (Saputra & Karsiwan, 2024). Other achievements by the government, such as simplifying administrative procedures and improving government services, have also been realised through digitalisation, internal oversight, and enhancing the capacity of civil servants (LAKIP Kota Metro, 2023). The average realisation of the 2024 Regional Budget (APBD) has successfully reached 99.29% of the target, reflecting effective and efficient budget absorption. Improvements in public services through the integration of digital systems via the public service mall that has been established have also successfully helped many city residents, although improvements in communication and human resources are still needed (Amantha et al., 2024). In the economic sector, the Metro City Government has endeavoured to increase purchasing power, economic productivity, food security, and create employment opportunities for local workers through training and economic empowerment of the people (RLPPD Kota Metro, 2024).

However, there have been some complaints and issues during the 2019-2024 period, such as the gap between development planning and on-the-ground implementation, which has impacted community aspirations, Delays and administrative issues related to civil servant rights, such as TPP, and the effectiveness of social assistance management for vulnerable and disaster-affected communities are some of the areas that need improvement and reform in the future (Metroceria, 2022).

### **c. Political Party Machinery Supporting Parties**

The 2024 Metro City Regional Election featured two pairs of candidates competing for the mayor and deputy mayor positions: Bambang Iman Santoso and M. Rafieq Adi Pradana (supported by the Democratic Party) against the incumbent candidates Wahdi and Qomaru Zaman, backed by a large coalition including the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), Gerindra, Golkar, PKS, PAN, PKB, NasDem, PSI, and PPP (KPU Kota Metro, 2024). Such significant support does not guarantee an easy victory for the supported pair (Dzul Fadli et al., 2018). Political party support often plays a key role in a candidate's success because parties provide networks, resources, and political legitimacy that can significantly influence voters (Rani, 2019; Tjenreng, M B Z, 2016). Additionally, internal party conflicts or legal issues, such as those faced by Wahdi-Qomaru, can weaken a candidate's position in the eyes of voters and contribute to their defeat (Harahap, 2019).

Political support is crucial because the political party backing Bambang-Rafieq has a stronger political base and machinery, despite relying on only one political party, and has successfully leveraged the local political momentum by exploiting the legal issues plaguing their political opponents. Meanwhile, the incumbent pair Wahdi-Qomaru faced significant obstacles, including the cancellation of Qomaru's candidacy as deputy mayor by the Metro Election Commission (KPU) due to election-related criminal violations. Political party support in the 2024 Metro City Regional Head Election (Pilkada) plays a crucial role, particularly in the context of the incumbent Wahdi Siradjudin's defeat. In the Pilkada, the candidate pair Bambang Iman Santoso and M. Rafieq Adi Pradana, backed by the Democratic Party, emerged victorious with 60.21% of the vote, defeating the incumbent Wahdi and his running mate Qomaru Zaman, who only secured 39.79% of the vote.

Overall, the defeat of Wahdi in the 2024 Local Elections in Metro City can be analysed from the perspective of weakened political party support and the

disqualification of his running mate, which led to a decline in electability. This underscores that, in addition to the candidates' capabilities, institutional party support and the integrity of the candidate pair are key factors in winning local elections at the city level.

#### **d. Social Media and Digital Literacy of Cities**

The image of candidates formed through social media, including trust and word of mouth, mediates between interactions on social media and the intention to vote for those candidates. The digital era has made social media a significant factor in influencing preferences and voting behaviour, both among highly educated and less educated voters. Social media has become one of the primary tools in political communication, particularly in reaching young voters and shaping their political preferences. Social media plays a major role in providing political information and campaigns quickly and widely, increasing the visibility of candidates and their work programmes. Interactions on social media, such as comments and support from political figures, influence voters' decisions (Nicolas & Donguiz, 2024)

Generation Z and Millennials increasingly rely on social media as a source of information and reference in determining their political choices. Studies in Indonesia validate that social media influences the political behaviour and preferences of young generations in every election contest, whether for local leaders or council members (Kholilah Yahya et al., 2024). Social media always provides engagement and opens space for voter participation, especially during digital campaigns, thereby boosting political participation through the introduction of various work programmes and direct interaction between candidates and voters (Prayudi & Edy Susilo, Muhammad Probosari, 2025).

Social media and news coverage play a role in regional elections. Some literature shows that social media accelerates the dissemination of information and shapes public opinion, which can influence a candidate's electability. According to Papacharissi (2010) in the journal *The Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, interactions within social media enable candidates and their supporters to build narratives, identities, and counter negative issues quickly, massively, and structurally (Papacharissi, 2011). Brian D. Loader and Dan Mercea (2014) in the book *Political Communication in the Age of Social Media* state that social media has become the primary battleground for political contestation among voters in modern politics and can influence election outcomes through voter mobilisation and the influence of opinions in the digital space (Munardin Hadma & Dwi Anggoro, 2021).

The incumbent's election defeat in the 2024 Metro City Regional Election was accompanied by significant media coverage and the role of social media. Wahdi, who initially ran alongside his vice-mayoral candidate Qomaru Zaman, faced the disqualification of his vice-mayoral candidate due to election-related criminal violations. The Metro City Election Commission (KPU) initially disqualified the WaRu pair because the vice-mayoral candidate was found guilty of election-related criminal violations. However, the National Election Commission (KPU RI) later overturned this decision, only disqualifying the vice-mayoral candidate, allowing Wahdi to proceed alone without a running mate (Kompas, 2024; Lampungpro, 2024).

Social media plays a key role as the primary communication tool for disseminating information about the status of Wahdi's candidacy. Official announcements, such as the cancellation and revocation, were disseminated through the

official Instagram account of the Metro City KPU, which served as a real-time information source for the public and local and national media (Detik, 2024). Additionally, public opinion pressure and online media coverage often highlighted the legal aspects and political dynamics surrounding Wahdi's candidacy, which helped shape public perception ahead of election day.

Media coverage beyond social media also plays a significant role in presenting issues in a more structured, extensive, and in-depth manner. This is evident in official reports and media investigations during the 2024 Metro Local Elections, which present legal facts and are reinforced by KPU decisions (Kompas, 2024; Detik, 2024). Wahdi's defeat in the 2024 Metro Regional Election was influenced by legal issues that divided the candidate pairs, as well as social media dynamics and news coverage that helped shape public perception and support during the campaign period.

### *Discussion*

On the whole, the incumbent's defeat in the 2024 Metro City Regional Election can be analysed from the perspective of weakening political party support and the disqualification of his running mate for the position of deputy mayor due to electoral offences. This had an impact on the certainty of the candidate chosen by active voters, leading to a decline in electability and electoral votes. This situation underscores that, in addition to the candidate's capabilities, institutional party support and the integrity of the candidate pair are key factors in winning the mayoral election at the Metro City level. Furthermore, despite being backed by a coalition of major parties that won the general election, the incumbent's failure due to disqualification by the Metro City Election Commission (KPU) has eroded the voter base and support for continuing to choose the incumbent candidate. This has led to speculation that despite being supported by many parties, the incumbent candidate's vote share did not increase significantly compared to the 2019 local elections, which stood at 29.1% of the vote (Kompas.com, 2020). Meanwhile, in the 2024 local elections, the Wahdi-Qomaru pair, who are the incumbent candidates, only managed to secure 39.79% of the total votes despite having such strong political party support. It is also worth noting that although they only secured 29.1% of the votes in 2019, the WaRu pair ran as independent candidates, without the support of any political party, and successfully won the election against three other candidates.

The performance of the government also serves as the basis for whether it continues or is terminated by its citizens from leading. Often, leaders, while striving to secure victory, are very close to their people, making promises of improvement and better change. However, once they achieve their goals, leaders often forget the promises of improvement and change made during the campaign and distance themselves from the people, leading to the failure of their leadership succession due to public disappointment (Ariansyah et al., 2024; Wulandary, 2022). As a form of punishment and retaliation, the residents of Metro no longer trust the incumbent leadership and tend to choose other candidates due to factors such as disappointment, emotions, or other social factors. Nevertheless, overall government performance has seen significant changes and breakthroughs in service improvement and governance, such as simplifying administrative procedures and enhancing government services through digitalisation, internal oversight, and improving civil servant capacity (LAKIP Kota Metro, 2023). Some survey results related to the incumbent's performance during July 2024 also indicate that 51.90% of Metro City residents are satisfied with WaRu's performance and leadership, although the dissatisfaction rate is also quite high at 48.10% (Radar



Lampung, 2024). This situation indicates that the incumbent's re-election prospects in the 2024 local elections are fairly balanced.

Another important factor is the city of Metro's status as an educational hub, meaning that most residents are well-informed about the five-yearly democratic process. The rationality of their choices and their ability to make informed decisions based on the incumbent's work programme and performance evaluation make this an interesting case to examine. Given that there are only two candidate pairs, the educational level and political preferences of Metro residents make it relatively easier to determine whether they support continuity or seek change. This is, of course, different when compared to the 2024 local elections. The educational level and political preferences of Metro residents, with only two candidate pairs, make it relatively easier to determine whether they support continuity or desire change. This is, of course, different when compared to the 2019 local elections, which had four candidate pairs. The incumbent pair only received 39.79% of the vote, compared to 60.21% for the challenger pair (KPU Kota Metro, 2024). his significant defeat in the vote count indicates that Metro City has been able to raise political awareness and educate its residents in selecting the best candidate based on their track record and the work programs they offer. Educational level plays a significant role in determining residents' political choices in a more honest and rational manner. Individuals with higher education tend to foster political awareness among residents to be more critical, sceptical, and choose candidates based on clear programmes and visions, rather than merely popularity or patronage (Ariansyah et al., 2024; Dzul Fadli et al., 2018). In the context of Metro, the high voter turnout of 74.09% indicates that residents are well-educated and actively participate in the democratic process at the local level.

The rapid advancement of technology has led to the swift and dynamic flow of information, reaching all segments of society through social media, which has significantly influenced the course of the Metro City mayoral election. The incumbent's defeat in the mayoral election was largely influenced by significant coverage in both television and social media (Kompas, 2024; Lampungpro, 2024). The disqualification of Qomaru Zaman as Wahdi's running mate due to election-related criminal violations has become one of the factors influencing rational voters in Metro City. Although Wahdi, as the incumbent, can still participate in the election, he faces difficulties in restoring the positive image of his leadership over the past five years, especially since he must run alone without a running mate. Official announcements, such as cancellations and revocations, were disseminated through the official Instagram account of the Metro City Election Commission, which served as a real-time information source for the public and local and national media (Detik, 2024). Additionally, the legal aspects and political dynamics surrounding Wahdi's candidacy, which shaped public perception ahead of election day, frequently appeared in local online media reports in Lampung in general and Metro City in particular, ultimately contributing to the incumbent's defeat in the 2024 local elections. Wahdi's defeat in the local elections was significantly influenced by legal issues that divided the candidate pair, as well as social media dynamics and media coverage that helped shape public perception and support during the campaign period.

## CONCLUSION

The incumbent's defeat in the 2024 Metro City Regional Election can be analysed from the perspective of Metro City's status as an educational hub, meaning that the majority of voters are well-informed about this five-yearly democratic process, rational in their choices, and discerning in their decision-making based on the candidates' work programmes and evaluations of the incumbent's performance. The high voter turnout of 74.09% indicates that city residents are well-educated and actively participate in ensuring the success of democratic processes. Additionally, the weakening support from political parties and the disqualification of the incumbent mayor's running mate for vice mayor due to election-related criminal violations were dominant factors that ultimately eroded the incumbent's voter base. Although the incumbent administration's performance was generally successful during its tenure and received appreciation from city residents, with changes and breakthroughs in improving government services and governance, such as simplifying administrative procedures and enhancing government services like digitalisation and internal oversight, it was not strong enough to secure victory in the 2024 local elections. In addition, Wahdi's defeat in the regional elections was largely influenced by online media and social media reports surrounding the legal issues that invalidated Qomaru's candidacy as deputy mayor, as well as the dynamics of social media and simultaneous news reports that helped shape public perception and support during the campaign period.

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