

Analyzing the Electoral Impact of Campaign Displays on Trees in Makassar's 2024 Municipal Election

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effectiveness of government efforts to protect trees in Makassar City from campaign prop violations during the 2024 election. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data was collected through field observations, document analysis, and interviews with key stakeholders, including KPU, Bawaslu, and the Environmental Agency. Applying Public Policy Theory, the study analyzes policy formulation, implementation, and enforcement. Findings reveal that despite a clear legal framework, enforcement is hindered by limited resources, weak sanctions, and repeated violations. Trees, streetlight poles, and other prohibited areas continue to be used for campaign props, causing environmental damage. While authorities conduct regular clean-ups, new violations persist, highlighting gaps in deterrence and public compliance. This research underscores the need for stricter regulations, stronger enforcement, and public awareness campaigns to protect urban greenery. Future studies should explore long-term policy impacts, technology-driven enforcement, and community-based strategies to promote environmental responsibility during elections.

Keywords: Election Regulation, Campaign Props Violations, Urban Environmental Protection, Policy Enforcement, Government Compliance, Election Governance

1. INTRODUCTION

This study strives to evaluate the impact of political campaigns on urban tree health in Makassar, Indonesia. Its goals include evaluating the damage caused by the 2024 local elections, analyzing regulatory frameworks, and offering evidence-based recommendations for balancing democratic processes with environmental protection. The utilization of trees as platforms for political campaign materials is not a recent development in Indonesia. Since the late 1990s reform period, trees in both urban and rural regions have regularly served as key locations for political propaganda. In Makassar, campaign crews frequently tie posters, banners, and fliers to tree trunks using nails, ropes, and adhesives. Throughout the previous year, trees have continued to become media for campaign materials due to their accessibility and high visibility along major roads and public spaces (McDonnell, 2010). Despite periodic regulatory efforts by municipal authorities, enforcement has remained inconsistent. Trees located near busy intersections, marketplaces, and government offices are particularly vulnerable, as they offer prime exposure for candidates seeking voter attention.

The persistence of this practice highlights systemic issues in campaign material management and regulatory oversight. Previous elections have shown that campaign teams, prioritize the visibility of the candidates over environmental concerns (Maretin & Poernomo, 2025). Given that Makassar trees are frequently used as political canvases, they have sustained long-term harm and scars. With 17 political parties and 850 candidates vying for 50 seats in Makassar's Regional People's Representative Council in the 2024 elections, this study highlights the critical need to adopt sustainable campaign tactics that preserve urban green spaces while preserving democratic expression. To regulate campaign activities and minimize environmental impact, the General Elections Commission (KPU) established specific locations where campaign materials are prohibited (Fahreza & Hufron, 2025).

According to KPU South Sulawesi Decision No. 2421 of 2023, campaign materials are not allowed in places of worship, hospitals, healthcare facilities, or educational institutions. Also, the prohibition on the use of green open spaces, particularly in the management of public green open spaces (RTH Publik) is regulated under Mayoral Regulation No. 71 of 2019 concerning the arrangement and management of green open spaces. In Section Four, Prohibitions, Article 31, it is stated that it is forbidden to cut down, relocate, or damage the function of public green open spaces without permission; damage and cause trees to die; damage or pollute parks where trees are planted or will be planted; and specifically, it is prohibited to

install advertisements by attaching or nailing them to tree trunks, as well as to damage facilities, infrastructure, and utilities located within public green open spaces.

It is also stated in Makassar Mayoral Regulation No. 28 of 2023 concerning the placement of incidental advertisements within the Makassar city area that the installation of incidental advertisements, such as banners, flags, billboards, and similar materials, is only permitted in locations specified in the issued permit. Additionally, the placement of incidental advertisements in the form of party attributes must comply with designated locations and must be removed or taken down by the advertiser or the respective political party (Fowler et al., 2021). The regulation also clearly outlines restricted areas where advertisements are prohibited, specifically the following roads within Makassar city: General Sudirman Street, General Ahmad Yani Street, Entertainer Street, Haji Bau Street, Somba Opu Street, Fish Market Street, Ujung Pandang Street, City Hall Street, Dr. Sam Ratulangi Street, Urip Sumoharjo Street, Andi Pangeran Pettarani Street.

According to Gellhorn (1972) Any advertisements that do not comply with these regulations will be subject to administrative sanctions, including a warning letter and enforcement measures such as removal or dismantling of the advertisement. These regulations aim to maintain urban aesthetics, cleanliness, and order while ensuring a fair electoral process. Despite these regulations, violations remain widespread. Campaign materials continue to appear in restricted areas, with trees and traffic poles frequently used as mounting points for campaign banners (Najjar, 2024). Trees are often found supporting multiple banners simultaneously, attached using nails and wire methods that cause severe damage to their trunks and overall health.

Among the various violations, the use of trees as platforms for campaign materials is one of the most frequent and concerning infractions. The repeated hammering of nails into tree trunks can have long-term detrimental effects, especially if this practice continues unchecked over multiple election cycles. Trees take many years to grow and require proper care to thrive as essential urban infrastructure (Patel et al., 2024). In a city like Makassar, where green spaces serve as vital sources of shade and air purification, continuous damage from campaign materials can weaken tree health, reduce their lifespan, and ultimately compromise their function as urban canopies. Therefore, urgent measures are needed to protect these trees and ensure they can continue providing environmental and aesthetic benefits to the city (Putri, 2023). Based on these problems, initial observations in the field show that campaign restrictions are still widely violated, especially regarding the use of trees. Therefore, this research focuses on Analyzing the Electoral Impact of Campaign Displays on Trees in Makassar's 2024 Municipal Election.

2. METHOD

The issue of campaign violations involving the use of trees as platforms for political advertisements is not a new phenomenon in Makassar. Despite existing electoral regulations and local government policies aimed at controlling the placement of campaign materials, enforcement has been inconsistent, allowing candidates and political parties to continue utilizing trees for their promotional activities. Since 2014, 2019, and the 2024 general election in Makassar. In order to assess how well government initiatives are working to mitigate such environmental harm while maintaining adherence to established regulations, there have always been infraction instances. This study focuses on the 2024 election campaign period, during which 18 political parties fielded 850 candidates competing for 50 legislative seats in the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) of Makassar. Given the intense competition among candidates, there has been a notable surge in campaign materials, including banners and posters, many of which have been unlawfully affixed to trees along major roads and public spaces. This persistent violation raises concerns about regulatory oversight, public awareness, and the environmental consequences of such practices. The study examines the extent of campaign material misuse in prohibited areas, the role of local authorities in monitoring and enforcing electoral regulations, and the broader implications for forestry management. By analyzing this case, the study aims to provide insights into policy effectiveness, enforcement challenges, and potential strategies for sustainable electoral practices in urban settings. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques to comprehensively assess the issue. The methodology consists of three primary components:

Observations

Systematic field observations were conducted to document the prevalence and distribution of campaign materials placed on trees. This process involved surveying major thoroughfares and restricted zones identified in the Mayoral Regulation No. 28 of 2023. Analyzing the patterns of campaign material placement and identifying hotspots of regulatory violations.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including representatives from the General Elections Commission (KPU), the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), the Makassar Environmental Agency, local government officials, and civil society organizations advocating for urban environmental protection. These interviews aimed to gather insights into enforcement efforts, regulatory gaps, and the challenges faced in ensuring compliance.

Document Analysis and Policy Review

A review of relevant legal documents, including KPU South Sulawesi Decision No. 2421 of 2023 and Makassar Mayoral Regulation No. 28 of 2023, was undertaken to understand the regulatory framework governing campaign material placement. Additionally, reports on past electoral violations and government actions were analyzed to contextualize the 2024 election case within a broader historical perspective.

In order to evaluate the government's involvement in correcting campaign violations that impact trees, this study uses Public Policy Theory as an analytical framework. In the context of electoral environmental governance. The framework offers insights into the creation, application, and assessment of policies (Sarjito, 2024). Key theoretical aspects include:

Policy Formulation

The process through which governments create regulations to address social challenges is emphasized by public policy theory. In this instance, the study looks at how environmental and electoral regulations have been developed to control the distribution of campaign materials and save the trees.

Policy Implementation

The effectiveness of a policy depends on its implementation, including the capacity of government agencies to enforce regulations, allocate resources, and engage stakeholders. This study investigates how Makassar's local government and electoral bodies implement existing regulations and the challenges they face in ensuring compliance.

Policy Evaluation

Determining whether rules accomplish their intended goals requires evaluating policy consequences. By examining enforcement actions, public views, and the magnitude of campaign infractions noted during the 2024 election, this study assesses the efficacy of current policies. By integrating these research methods and theoretical perspectives, this study seeks to provide a data-driven evaluation of the government's role in protecting trees from campaign violations and to propose recommendations for strengthening electoral environmental governance in Makassar.

3. RESULTS

The findings of this study indicate that during the general election in Makassar in 2024, campaign irregularities pertaining to the usage of trees for political advertising persisted despite the presence of electoral legislation and local government ordinances. During the field observations, numerous instances of campaign materials, including posters and banners, were illegally attached to trees in different parts of the city. Major roadways, junctions, and busy public locations were the most impacted because they were the places where campaign ads had the best chance of being seen.

Policy Formulation

Policy formulation is how governments develop regulations, guidelines, and action plans to address specific societal issues. In the context of this study, policy formulation refers to the development of rules and regulations governing the placement of campaign materials to prevent environmental damage particularly the use of trees for campaign advertisements (Maibach, 1993). in regulating campaign material placement, a combination of national and local regulations is guided to ensure environmental sustainability and urban order. Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections, particularly Article 298, mandates the General Elections Commission (KPU) to coordinate with local governments in designating locations for campaign materials while considering ethics, aesthetics, cleanliness, and urban beauty. At the regional level, Makassar City Regional Regulation No. 3 of 2014 on Green Open Spaces (RTH) establishes the legal foundation for protecting urban green areas and prohibits activities that could degrade the environment. Strengthening these provisions, Makassar Mayoral Regulation No. 71 of 2019, specifically Article 31, explicitly forbids actions such as cutting down trees, damaging green spaces, placing advertisements on trees, and other destructive activities within RTH areas. Lastly, Makassar Mayoral Regulation No. 28 of 2023 further refines these restrictions by designating specific zones where campaign materials are prohibited, including major roads, green spaces, and government-owned infrastructure especially during for the implementation of general elections, presidential elections and regional head elections in the city of Makassar.

Policy Implementation

Policy implementation refers to the process by which government authorities translate policies into concrete actions to achieve desired outcomes. In the context of this study, policy implementation focuses on how the Makassar city government enforces regulations to protect urban trees from damage caused by campaign materials during the 2024 election. The implementation of Makassar Mayor's Regulation Number 28 of 2023 has been diligently pursued by various government agencies involved, including the National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol), the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda), and the Environmental Services Department. Prior to the general election implementation, this regulation was thoroughly disseminated to the Makassar City Election Commission (KPU), the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), the Police, and several other agencies to be followed and jointly implemented throughout the election period. These institutions have maintained active communication within coordination forums, demonstrating their commitment to ensuring that the election implementation remains free from violations. (1) The Regional Revenue Agency team had removed campaign props on Jln. Perintis Kemerdekaan; (2) The Makassar City Environmental Agency had removed campaign props on Jalan Boulevard.

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Source: Data from Observation, 2024

Despite these concerted efforts, the actual implementation has revealed significant challenges. Numerous candidates and their campaign teams have continued to violate the regulations, particularly regarding prohibited campaign zones. These practices persisted despite explicit prohibitions outlined in KPU South Sulawesi Decision No. 2421 of 2023 and Makassar Mayoral Regulation No. 28 of 2023, which designated certain zones as campaign-free areas. From the 12 roads designated as no-campaign zones, Jalan Urip Sumoharjo and Jalan Andi Pangeran Pettarani were found to have the highest frequency of violations. In these areas, young trees aged between 5 to 10 years have been extensively utilized as mounting points for campaign banners and posters. The high density of materials affixed to these trees disrupts their natural growth and increases the risk of long-term damage. According to the Acting Head of the Makassar City Environmental Agency, Mr. Ferdi Muchtar, each enforcement operation finds an average of 10 to 15 nails embedded in a single tree. Over two months of cleanup efforts, approximately 105 kg of nails were removed from trees. These nails disrupt nutrient circulation, ultimately causing stunted growth, withering leaves, and in some cases, the death of the trees.

Table 1. Data on Tree Damage and Campaign Material Installation on Main Roads in Makassar

Observation Location	Number of Affected Trees	Average Banners per Tree	Estimated Total Banners	Type of Damage
Jl.Veteran	±750 Trees	2-3 banner	2250	Repeated nail punctures, severe damage to tree bark and trunk
Jl. Pettarani	±200 Trees	2-3 banner	600	Nail punctures for banner installation, damage to bark on young trees
Jl. Pengayoman	±300 Trees	3 Banner	900	Nail punctures for banner installation, tree bark damage
Jl. Boulevard	±300 Trees	2 Banner	900	Nail punctures for banner installation, many wires hindering tree growth
Jl.Gunung Bawakaraeng	±300 Trees	3 Banner	900	Nail punctures for banner installation, bark damage, some trees with wilting leaves
Jl.Perintis Kemerdekaan	±1,200 Trees	3 banner	3600	Nail punctures for banner installation, many wires hindering tree growth
Jl.Hertasning	±560 Trees	4 banner	1120	Nail punctures, leftover wooden banner supports still attached, wires strangling trees, and many young trees affected by nails.
Total	3150	At least 3 Banners per Tree	9150 Baliho	Physical damage due to repeated nail punctures, potentially leading to tree death

In areas not explicitly mentioned in the Makassar Mayoral Regulation, the impact is relatively similar. Signs of damage can be seen on nearly every roadside tree, with punctured bark, embedded nails, and remnants of campaign materials scattered throughout the city. Based on field observations conducted on several main roads in Makassar, alarming findings have emerged. It was recorded that approximately 2,500 to 3,150 trees suffered damage due to the installation of campaign materials, with each tree being affixed with at least two small banners using nails. This means there are at least 9,150 new damage points on these trees. Trees along Jalan Veteran, numbering around 750, experienced the highest level of damage, followed by Jalan Pettarani with 200 trees and Jalan Hertasning with 500 trees. Meanwhile, Jalan Pengayoman and Jalan Gunung Bawakaraeng each had around 300 and 100 trees, respectively, that suffered similar damage. The damage observed was not only in the form of nail holes but also included torn tree bark and trunk damage due to the overlapping installation of banners and leftover wooden fragments from campaign boards still hanging on the trees.

(a) The condition of one of the trees on Jl. Antang Raya, which has been adorned with a flag and campaign props by a legislative candidate. (b) The condition of a tree on Jl. Andi Djemma, where campaign props have been installed on both

sides by attaching wooden supports to the tree using nailed fastenings.





(b)

Source: Data from observation, 2024

These observations highlight the large-scale destruction of trees, with each tree sustaining at least two points of damage from banner installations. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that many of these same trees have been repeatedly targeted for campaign material placement during multiple political campaign periods. The extensive damage to thousands of trees not only threatens their survival—trees that play a crucial role in providing oxygen for the city—but also contributes to unstable temperatures and weather conditions in the affected areas. Several government agencies, including Satpol PP, the Environmental Agency (Dinas Lingkungan Hidup), and the Regional Revenue Agency (Bapenda), have actively conducted clean-up operations to remove campaign materials from trees and other restricted areas.

At the end of the campaign period, during the *masa tenang* (cooling-off period), the General Elections Commission (KPU) and the Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) urged all election participants to remove their campaign materials in their respective electoral areas. The goal was to ensure that, by election day and afterward, Makassar would be free from campaign materials. However, in several areas, remnants of campaign materials were still found. Many of these materials were not properly removed—some were simply torn down, leaving fragments of banners and posters still attached to trees. In other cases, only the banners were taken, leaving behind ropes, nails, and wires embedded in the trees, posing further risks to both urban aesthetics and the health of the trees. The persistent use of trees as platforms for campaign materials in Makassar highlights the urgent need for stricter enforcement, greater political responsibility, and increased public awareness regarding the impact of such practices on urban greenery (Asnur & Djamaluddin, 2024). While regulations exist, their inconsistent implementation has led to ongoing violations that threaten the health of trees and the city's environmental sustainability.

Policy Evaluation

The evaluation of existing policies on campaign material placement reveals significant enforcement challenges despite clear regulatory frameworks. Despite the committed efforts of the Makassar City Election Commission (KPU), Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), and various relevant government departments in conducting outreach programs and clean-up operations, violations continue to occur at an alarming rate. This persistent non-compliance reflects a fundamental gap between policy intention and implementation effectiveness.

The regulatory architecture established through KPU South Sulawesi Decision No. 2421 of 2023 and Makassar Mayoral Regulation No. 28 of 2023 provides comprehensive guidelines prohibiting campaign materials in designated zones. However, the recurring nature of violations—particularly along major thoroughfares like Jalan Urip Sumoharjo and Jalan Andi Pangeran Pettarani—indicates that current enforcement mechanisms lack sufficient deterrent power. Even after authorities meticulously remove campaign materials from trees and other restricted locations, new banners and posters rapidly reappear, creating a frustrating cycle of removal and reinstallation. Align with research from Alaydrus (2023), this pattern of continued non-compliance points to the necessity for more stringent regulatory measures and a more proactive approach to candidate engagement during elections. The current penalty structure appears inadequate to discourage political parties and candidates from defying regulations. Without meaningful consequences, electoral participants have little incentive to adhere to placement restrictions, particularly in high-visibility areas that offer maximum campaign exposure (Marquart et al., 2026).

Moving forward, policy improvements should focus on two key areas: strengthening penalty mechanisms and enhancing direct engagement with candidates. More substantial fines and clearly communicated legal consequences would create stronger deterrents, while personalized outreach to campaign teams before the election period could foster greater understanding of the environmental impact of improper material placement. Additionally, requiring candidates to formally acknowledge placement restrictions as part of their registration process might increase accountability and compliance. The protection of urban greenery and public infrastructure during electoral cycles requires a more comprehensive approach that balances democratic expression with environmental sustainability (Salampessy et al., 2023). By combining enhanced regulatory enforcement with proactive candidate engagement, future implementation of campaign material regulations can achieve better compliance outcomes while preserving the integrity of Makassar's urban ecosystem.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study highlight the persistent issue of campaign violations involving the use of urban trees for political

advertising in Makassar's 2024 election. Despite the existence of regulatory frameworks such as KPU South Sulawesi Decision No. 2421 of 2023 and Makassar Mayoral Regulation No. 28 of 2023, enforcement efforts remain insufficient to prevent widespread violations. Campaign materials continue to be placed in restricted areas, particularly on trees in high-traffic locations, leading to environmental degradation and regulatory challenges. Government agencies, including Satpol PP, the Environmental Agency, and Bapenda, have made consistent efforts to remove illegal campaign materials from trees and other prohibited areas. However, the rapid reappearance of banners and posters indicates a lack of long-term deterrence. This cycle of violation and enforcement demonstrates that current policies are reactive rather than preventive, necessitating a more strategic approach to policy implementation. Comprehensive public awareness efforts, harsher sanctions, and more robust enforcement procedures are required to improve compliance and reduce environmental harm. Promoting sustainable campaign methods will require cooperation from political stakeholders, environmental organizations, civil society groups, and electoral bodies. In order to guarantee that future elections in Makassar preserve both democratic integrity and environmental sustainability, it will be crucial to strengthen policy implementation and public engagement.

Future research should explore key areas to improve policy effectiveness and enforcement strategies, including evaluating the long-term impact and sustainability of electoral and environmental policies across multiple election cycles. Comparative studies with other cities facing similar challenges could help identify best practices for regulating and enforcing campaign material usage. Additionally, examining the effectiveness of public awareness campaigns and community engagement initiatives can provide insights into strategies that enhance policy compliance. By addressing these areas, future research can support the development of more effective policies and stronger enforcement mechanisms, ensuring that urban environmental protection remains a priority in the context of electoral governance.

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