

Journal of Religion, Local Politics, and Law 2(3), 291-310

Journal of Religion, Local Politics, and Law

<https://propanoramic.com/index.php/jrlpl/index>

DOI: 10.64595/jrlpl.v2n3.p291-310



Incumbent Performance Dissatisfaction Influences Blank-Box Voting in the 2024 Gresik Election

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Abstract

The high proportion of blank votes in the 2024 regional election in Gresik Regency reflects an important phenomenon in local democratic participation, particularly in uncontested elections. Despite the increasing occurrence of blank voting in Indonesia, empirical evidence explaining how public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance influences this behavior remains limited. This study aims to examine the effect of public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance on the propensity to vote for the blank box. A quantitative research design was employed using data from 150 respondents selected through quota sampling from five sub districts Sidayu, Bungah, Manyar, Ujungpangkah, and Kebomas which recorded the highest proportion of blank votes in the election. Data were collected through structured Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using multinomial logistic regression. The findings indicate that the model demonstrates a good fit, with a significant Omnibus Test ($p < 0.001$) and Pearson and Deviance statistics exceeding 0.05. Public dissatisfaction has a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of voting for the blank box ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.687$, $p < 0.001$). These findings extend rational choice theory by demonstrating that, in uncontested local elections, blank voting represents a rational mechanism of electoral accountability rather than merely political apathy. This study provides empirical evidence that public evaluations of incumbent performance constitute a significant determinant of blank-box voting in single-candidate local elections, thereby enriching the understanding of electoral behavior in uncontested democratic contests. The study contributes to the literature on electoral behavior by highlighting public performance evaluation as an important determinant of blank voting in local elections.

Keyword: Dissatisfaction, Empty Box, Voting Behavior

Paper Type: Research Paper

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Received: 21-04-2026; Received in Revised From 27-07-2026; Accepted: 29-07-2026; Available Online: 30-07-2026

Cite This Document as: Miare, S. K., Ainurrofiah, F., Santoso, B., & Affandi, M. A. (2026). Incumbent performance dissatisfaction influences blank-box voting in the 2024 Gresik election.

Journal of Religion, Local Politics, and Law, Volume 2(3), 291–310.
<https://doi.org/10.64595/jrlpl.v2n3.p291-310>

Introduction

The increasing number of uncontested regional elections in Indonesia has made blank box voting an important phenomenon in the study of electoral behavior. In such elections, voters are limited to supporting the sole candidate or choosing the blank box. The number of uncontested elections increased from 25 regions in 2020 to 37 regions in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections (KPU, 2020; KPU, 2024), raising important questions about how voters exercise democratic accountability despite limited electoral competition. Although previous studies have examined blank-box voting in relation to political participation and uncontested elections, limited empirical evidence explains whether public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance influences voters' decisions to choose the blank box.

One notable case is the 2024 Regional Head Election in Gresik Regency, East Java, where the sole candidate pair, Fandi Akhmad Yani–Asluchul Alif, competed against the blank box. Fandi Akhmad Yani previously served as Regent of Gresik for the 2021–2024 term together with Vice Regent Aminatun Habibah, enabling voters to evaluate the incumbent's performance based on their governing experience. The election recorded one of the highest proportions of blank-box votes in Indonesia, making Gresik an important case for examining whether public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance influences the propensity to vote for the blank box.

Single candidate means that the public can only choose the single candidate pair or vote for the empty box. This condition certainly reduces political competition in Gresik. Thus, this phenomenon invites public interest to see whether the single candidate will win or lose, which in this phenomenon has the potential to enhance local democracy and political participation, or conversely, will reduce democracy and political participation among the people of Gresik

The level of public satisfaction with Gus Yani's policies, programs, and performance during his tenure as the Regent of Gresik becomes a factor that can help influence voters' tendency to make rational choices (Nikiforov, 2026). If the public is satisfied with Gus Yani's performance during his previous term, he will have a greater chance of receiving votes. Conversely, if there are significant gaps in several areas during Gus Yani's previous term, the public may express their dissatisfaction by choosing the empty box.

The results of the Gresik Regency Pilkada vote count held on November 27, 2024, show that Fandi Akhmad Yani - Asluchul Alif received 366,944 votes (59.72%) and the empty box received 247,479 votes (40.28%). With the following details:

NO.	URAIAN	RINCIAN															
IV	DATA RINCIAN PEROLEHAN SUARA PASANGAN CALON BUPATI DAN WAKIL BUPATI	DUKUN	BALONGPANGGANG	PANCENG	BENJENG	DUDUKSAMPEYAN	WRINGINANOM	UJUNG PANGKAH	KEDAMEAN	SIDAYU	MANYAR	CERME	BUNGAH	MENGANTI	KEBOMAS	DRIOREJO	JUMLAH PENDAHAAN
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
NOMOR DAN NAMA PASANGAN CALON																	
1	H. FANDI AKHMAD YANI, S.E., M. MB. - dr. H. ASLUCHUL ALIF, M.Kes., M.M., M.HP.	15.665	22.245	11.345	23.563	21.820	31.616	9.435	25.302	6.621	21.124	28.810	12.082	35.382	26.005	33.469	324.484
2	KOLOM KOSONG TIDAK BERGAMBAR	13.714	7.261	8.769	10.034	6.814	7.222	12.104	8.728	12.817	33.499	16.730	20.768	23.415	27.141	13.141	222.157

Figure 1 Vote Acquisition in the Subdistricts of Gresik Regency

The results of the vote count in the 2024 Gresik Regency Regional Election show that the phenomenon of the empty box received significant attention from the public. Although the single candidate pair Fandi Akhmad Yani – Asluchul Alif won the vote, the empty box managed to secure 40.28% of the votes, which is quite significant as evidenced by five districts where the empty box received higher votes: Sidayu District with 12,817 votes (65.94%), Bungah with 20,768 votes (63.22%), Manyar with 33,499 votes (61.33%), Ujung Pangkah with 12,104 votes (56.20%), and Kebomas with 27,141 votes (51.07%) (KPU, 2024). The high number of votes for the empty box in the 2024 Gresik Regency Election indicates that many people chose not to support the single candidate pair. The fact that five districts received more votes for the empty box than for the candidate couple indicates an interesting political dynamic.

High number of votes for the empty box raises the question of whether the empty box is a form of dissatisfaction with Gus Yani's leadership in the previous term, or if there are other factors influencing the choices of the people of Gresik. In the world of politics, the level of trust in the current leader or former leader becomes an important factor in determining public preference. Similarly, if there is a lack of trust in the previous leader or a lack of trust in the current leader, a blank box can be used as a protest or a means of communication (Jönsson, 2026).

Public evaluation of regional government performance is an important aspect in understanding local political dynamics, especially in the lead-up to regional head elections. In the context of Gresik Regency during the 2020–2024 period, various empirical indicators show the public's assessment of the quality of public services and the effectiveness of local government policies.

One of the indicators that can be referenced is the Public Service Index assessment by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, which in 2022 placed Gresik Regency at the bottom rank in East Java Province with a score of 57.65. Information regarding this achievement was obtained from the mass media coverage by Jawa Pos with the title "Public Service Score in Gresik is the Lowest in East Java," which reviews the assessment results by the Indonesian Ombudsman related to the performance of regional government public services. This assessment reflects the ongoing weaknesses in the administration of public services, particularly in the aspects of service procedures, the competence of the administrators, and the management of public complaints.

Research on blank box voting, single-candidate elections, and incumbent performance has generally demonstrated that voters' decisions are shaped by rational evaluations rather than solely by political preferences. (Rahmadanni & Deviani, 2024) argue that the victory of the blank box in Makassar was driven by public distrust of the sole candidate, reflecting rational and critical voter behavior as well as resistance to elitist political practices. Similarly, (Khumairo' & Asfar, 2023) found that political and economic evaluations of incumbent performance significantly influenced voter behavior in the 2018 North Sumatra gubernatorial election, suggesting that voters made electoral decisions based on rational assessments of government performance. Consistent with these findings, (Widodo, 2022) reported that voters' evaluations of incumbent performance significantly affected electoral decision-making in the 2020 Medan mayoral election, supporting the relevance of rational choice in explaining voting behavior.

Although these studies consistently highlight the importance of rational evaluations in electoral decision-making, they differ in their analytical focus. (Xie, 2026) primarily examined the blank-box phenomenon as a manifestation of public distrust toward a sole candidate, whereas (Rahmadanni & Deviani, 2024) and (Mahardika, 2021) emphasized retrospective evaluations of incumbent performance in competitive elections. Limited empirical evidence, however, has examined whether public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance directly influences the propensity to vote for the blank box in uncontested regional elections. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by investigating the effect of public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance on blank-box voting in the 2024 Gresik Regional Election, thereby extending the application of Rational Choice Theory to the context of single-candidate local elections.

This phenomenon aligns with the rational choice approach, where individuals as rational actors make political decisions based on cost-benefit considerations that will impact their lives, including decisions in selecting political candidates (Dival et al., 2026). When the performance of an incumbent is unsatisfactory, choosing the empty box becomes a rational choice that requires

caution to avoid legitimizing the incumbent. When the performance of an incumbent is unsatisfactory, choosing the empty box becomes a rational choice that requires caution to avoid legitimizing corrupt leaders (Muliono et al., 2026).

This study focuses on five districts in Gresik Regency that show a higher number of votes for the empty box compared to the single candidate pair, namely Sidayu, Bungah, Manyar, Ujungpangkah, and Kebomas Districts. The selection of these regions was made with the consideration that these sub-districts represent areas with a greater tendency to support the empty box, making it relevant to examine the conceptual relationship between the variable of dissatisfaction with the incumbent's performance and the tendency to choose the empty box.

This study uses a survey method with respondent sampling, so the research results are not intended to generalize the entire voter population in the five sub-districts where the research is conducted. Thus, it does not compare with the aggregate data of election results across the entire Gresik Regency, but rather focuses on the analysis of the conceptual relationship between the variable of dissatisfaction with the incumbent's performance and the tendency to choose the empty box among the respondents who are the sample of the study.

The problem formulation in this study falls into the category of causal associative problem formulation, which aims to determine the influence between two or more variables. This research examines the relationship between the variable of public dissatisfaction with the performance of the incumbent as the independent variable and the tendency to choose the empty box as the dependent variable (Isfold Sigurdardottir et al., 2026). This approach is used to understand whether there is a statistically significant influence between the two variables in the context of the 2024 regional election in Gresik Regency. Referring to the background that has been previously outlined, as well as the real phenomena occurring in the field, the problem formulation in this research is "Is there a significant influence between public dissatisfaction with the incumbent's performance and the tendency to choose the empty box in the 2024 Gresik regency regional election?" "With reference to the background that has been previously outlined, as well as the real phenomena occurring in the field, the problem formulation in this research is 'Is there a significant influence of public dissatisfaction with the performance of the incumbent on the tendency to choose the empty box in the 2024 regional head election in Gresik Regency?'"

The present study aims to examine the effect of public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance (independent variable/X) on the propensity to vote for the blank box (dependent variable/Y) in the 2024 Gresik Regional Election. In addition, this study seeks to identify the factors underlying voters' decisions to choose the blank box in an uncontested local election.

Unlike previous studies, which primarily interpreted blank-box voting as a manifestation of political protest, distrust toward a sole candidate, or electoral participation in uncontested elections, this study specifically examines public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance as the principal determinant of blank-box voting (Soliz et al., 2026). By focusing on the 2024 Gresik Regional Election, where the blank box obtained one of the highest vote shares in Indonesia, this study extends the application of Anthony Downs' Rational Choice Theory to the context of uncontested local elections. The study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that blank-box voting represents a rational mechanism of electoral accountability based on retrospective evaluations of incumbent performance, rather than merely an expression of political apathy or protest voting.

Based on the research objectives and the proposed conceptual framework, the hypotheses are

1. Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant influence between dissatisfaction with the incumbent's performance and the tendency to choose the empty box in the 2024 Gresik district election.
2. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant influence between dissatisfaction with the incumbent's performance and the tendency to choose the empty box in the 2024 Gresik district election.

Methods

This research employed a quantitative research design to examine the effect of public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance (independent variable, X) on the propensity to vote for the blank box (dependent variable, Y) in the 2024 Gresik Regional Election. The study was conducted from July to October 2025 in five sub-districts of Gresik Regency: Sidayu, Bungah, Manyar, Ujungpangkah, and Kebomas, which recorded the highest proportion of blank-box votes in the election. These locations were purposively selected because they represented areas where the phenomenon under investigation was most prominent.

The study population consisted of all registered voters included in the 2024 Permanent Voter List in the five selected sub-districts of Gresik Regency. Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of Gresik Regency, the DPT comprised 32,315 voters in Sidayu, 50,576 in Bungah, 86,901 in Manyar, 39,346 in Ujungpangkah, and 82,555 in Kebomas.

The sample was selected using a non-probability quota sampling technique. This approach was considered appropriate because the study did not aim to produce statistical generalizations for the entire voter population of Gresik Regency, but rather to examine voting behavior in sub-districts that exhibited the highest proportion of blank-box votes. Accordingly, the five sub-districts were

chosen as the most relevant settings for investigating the relationship between public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance and the propensity to vote for the blank box.

A total of 150 respondents participated in the study, with 30 respondents recruited from each sub district (Miron et al., 2026). An equal quota was assigned to each sub-district to ensure balanced representation across the five research locations and to facilitate comparisons of voters' evaluations within areas where the blank-box phenomenon was most evident. Therefore, the sample was intended to represent the characteristics of voters in the selected sub-districts rather than the entire electorate of Gresik Regency.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended questions. The independent variable, public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance, was operationalized into three dimensions: (1) quality of public services and government performance, (2) policy responsiveness, and (3) integrity. These dimensions were measured using 30 Likert-scale items, with response categories ranging from 1 (very satisfied) to 4 (very dissatisfied). The dependent variable, propensity to vote for the blank box, was measured as a nominal categorical variable with three mutually exclusive outcomes: vote for the candidate pair (0), vote for the blank box (1), and abstain (2).

Prior to data analysis, the questionnaire was subjected to validity and reliability testing. Item validity for the incumbent performance dissatisfaction scale was assessed using the Spearman Rank correlation, with all 30 items demonstrating significant corrected item-total correlations above the minimum acceptable threshold ($r > 0.361$; $p < 0.05$), indicating satisfactory construct validity. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, producing a coefficient of 0.942, which indicates excellent internal consistency. Because the dependent variable consisted of respondents' categorical voting choices rather than multiple measurement items, validity and reliability tests were not conducted for this variable.

The data were analyzed using multinomial logistic regression, which is appropriate because the dependent variable comprises three nominal categories without an ordinal structure. The category "vote for the candidate pair" was specified as the reference category, allowing comparisons between respondents who voted for the blank box or abstained and those who supported the candidate pair (Washington et al., 2026). Model adequacy was evaluated using the Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients and the Goodness-of-Fit Test (Pearson and Deviance statistics). The explanatory power of the model was assessed using Pseudo R^2 (Chien et al., 2026),

while the magnitude of the effect of the independent variable was interpreted through odds ratios ($\text{Exp}(B)$) with a significance level of 0.05.

Result and Discussion

Average Indicator Value

Table 1 presents the average indicator values of the dissatisfaction variable toward the performance of incumbents, which consists of three main dimensions: the quality of public services and performance in various fields, policy responsiveness, and integrity.

Table 1. Average Value of Dissatisfaction Indicators

No	Indicator	Mean
1.	Quality of Public Services and Performance in Various Fields	2,56%
2.	Policy Responsiveness	2,67%
3.	Integritas	2,72%

Source: Primary data, processed by the researcher (2025)

Based on table, the mean scores for all dimensions of incumbent performance range from 2.56 to 2.72 on a four-point Likert scale, indicating a moderate level of public dissatisfaction. The moderate category was determined using equal class intervals on the four-point scale, where the observed mean values fall within the middle range, suggesting that respondents perceived the incumbent's performance as neither satisfactory nor highly unsatisfactory. Among the three dimensions, integrity recorded the highest mean score (2.72), followed by policy responsiveness (2.67) and public service quality and government performance (2.56). These findings suggest that respondents expressed relatively greater dissatisfaction with the government's integrity and responsiveness than with public service delivery.

From the perspective of Anthony Downs' Rational Choice Theory, voters evaluate government performance before making electoral decisions. Public dissatisfaction reflected in these three dimensions indicates that voters assessed the costs and benefits of supporting the incumbent based on their previous governing experience (Kadioğlu Kumtepe, 2026). In an uncontested election, where electoral alternatives are limited, dissatisfaction with public service quality, policy responsiveness, and government integrity may encourage voters to select the blank box as a rational mechanism for expressing electoral accountability rather than merely abstaining or acting out of political apathy.

These findings are consistent with previous empirical studies. (Pétry, 1995)found that

retrospective evaluations of government performance significantly influenced voting decisions through a rational choice mechanism. Similarly, (Diamond, 1994) demonstrated that voters' assessments of incumbent performance affected electoral preferences, while (Sonnenschein, 2005) argued that blank-box voting reflected rational political evaluation rather than merely political protest. Therefore, the descriptive results provide preliminary evidence that public dissatisfaction constitutes an important explanatory factor, which is further examined through multinomial logistic regression analysis in the subsequent section.

Cross Tabulation of Variable X with Variable Y

The cross-tabulation results reveal a consistent pattern across the three dimensions of incumbent performance public service quality and performance, policy responsiveness, and integrity (Andrews & Van De Walle, 2013). As respondents' dissatisfaction with incumbent performance increases, so does their propensity to vote for the blank box, whereas respondents reporting higher levels of satisfaction tend to support the candidate pair. This pattern indicates a positive relationship between evaluations of government performance and voting behavior in the 2024 Gresik Regional Election (A. M. Fauzi et al., 2025). The findings suggest that voters did not reject the incumbent merely because of the absence of electoral competition; rather, they retrospectively evaluated government performance across multiple dimensions before making their electoral decisions. Consequently, in the context of Gresik's uncontested election, voting for the blank box functioned as a mechanism of electoral accountability through which voters expressed dissatisfaction despite the absence of an alternative candidate.

These findings extend Anthony Downs' Rational Choice Theory by demonstrating that rational electoral decision-making is not limited to choosing among competing candidates. Downs argues that voters maximize expected utility by selecting the political option that provides the greatest perceived benefit. In uncontested local elections, however, voters cannot compare multiple candidates. Instead, the findings suggest that the blank box itself becomes a rational electoral alternative, allowing citizens to sanction incumbents whose previous performance is perceived as unsatisfactory. Thus, this study expands the application of Rational Choice Theory to electoral settings characterized by limited political competition.

The findings both confirm and extend previous empirical studies. Consistent with Ilham and Purwaningsih (2020), blank-box voting reflects rational political evaluation rather than mere political apathy. Likewise, (Alfarisi et al., 2025) demonstrated that retrospective evaluations of government performance shape electoral decisions, while (Romli, 2018) highlighted the

importance of incumbent performance in influencing voter preferences. However, unlike these previous studies, which primarily examined either political distrust or voting behavior in competitive elections, the present study identifies public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance as a direct determinant of blank box voting in an uncontested local election. This finding provides empirical evidence that retrospective performance evaluation remains influential even when voters are not offered an alternative candidate.

The Gresik case also offers an important contextual contribution. Because Fandi Akhmad Yani had previously served as Regent of Gresik (2021–2024), voters possessed direct experience in evaluating the incumbent's performance before the election. Consequently, the decision to vote for the blank box reflected retrospective judgments of government performance rather than uncertainty toward an unfamiliar candidate (Rahmadi et al., 2021). This contextual evidence suggests that a high proportion of blank-box votes in uncontested elections should not automatically be interpreted as political apathy, but may instead represent a rational expression of democratic accountability.

These findings have broader implications for the study of electoral behavior and democratic participation. They demonstrate that blank-box voting should be understood as an alternative mechanism through which citizens evaluate and sanction incumbent governments in the absence of electoral competition (Mackiewicz, 2018). Therefore, the study contributes to the literature by extending Rational Choice Theory to uncontested local elections and highlighting incumbent performance dissatisfaction as an important determinant of blank-box voting.

Cross Tabulation of Variable X with District

The cross-tabulation results show a fairly consistent pattern across the three dimensions, namely the quality of public service and performance, policy responsiveness, and integrity, although there are variations in dissatisfaction levels among sub-districts. In general, districts such as Manyar, Kebomas, Bungah, and Sidayu show higher levels of dissatisfaction, while Ujungpangkah tends to have relatively higher satisfaction levels. This pattern shows that the public's evaluation of the incumbent's performance is not uniform, but rather influenced by social and economic conditions, as well as the proximity of the area to service and government centers in the 2024 Gresik Regency regional election.

In the dimension of public service quality and performance, the highest dissatisfaction is observed in sub-districts with high economic activity and complex service needs such as Manyar and Kebomas. Conversely, Ujungpangkah shows a higher level of satisfaction despite having limited facilities, indicating a difference in public expectations based on geographical conditions

(Jönsson, 2026). The same pattern occurs in the dimension of policy responsiveness, where Bungah, Manyar, and Sidayu are dominated by the dissatisfied category, while Ujungpangkah is relatively more balanced. In the dimension of integrity, dissatisfaction is more prevalent in areas with high interaction intensity with government services, while areas with limited access show more moderate assessments.

Theoretically, this finding aligns with the rational choice theory proposed by Anthony Downs in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957), which explains that voters act as rational actors who weigh benefits and losses based on their direct experiences. Differences in access, distance to service centers, and the level of regional development affect the extent of benefits received by the community, resulting in variations in satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels between sub-districts.

These findings are also supported by previous research that emphasizes the importance of regional context. (Sonnenschein, 2005) showed that support for the empty box is not only influenced by dissatisfaction but also by the uneven distribution of political access and service quality across regions. (Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change, 2014) found that the political decisions of the community are greatly influenced by the conditions of the social environment and access to resources, where regions with limited access tend to have different participation patterns. (Nugroho et al., 2025) also emphasize that information and direct experience with government performance, which often varies between regions, influence voters' political preferences.

Furthermore, the research by Ayu Amanda A'isyatul Khumairo' and Muhammad Asfar (2023) shows that voters in regions with different levels of development have different evaluation patterns toward the government. Research by Detty Arimbi Hartas et al. (2023) and Imam Syahid et al. (2024) also emphasizes that the phenomenon of the empty box cannot be separated from development disparities and differences in access to public services between regions, which then shapes the political choices of the community rationally.

Cross Tabulation of Variable Y with District

The results of the cross-tabulation show a fairly clear pattern between the tendency to choose (variable Y) and the respondents' residential districts. In general, the choice of the empty box became the dominant category in most areas, especially in the sub-districts of Manyar, Bungah, and Sidayu, while the sub-district of Kebomas showed a higher tendency to choose candidate pairs. Meanwhile, Ujungpangkah District shows a more balanced distribution between candidate pairs, empty boxes, and blank votes (S. A. Fauzi & Fauzi, 2021). This pattern shows that the voting behavior of the community is not uniform, but rather influenced by geographical conditions, access

to public services, and socio-economic characteristics in each sub-district in the 2024 Gresik Regency Regional Election.

In areas with high levels of industrialization and density like Manyar, the high number of blank votes indicates a disparity between public expectations and the benefits perceived. A similar situation is also seen in Bungah and Sidayu, which have limited infrastructure and access to public services, prompting the community to express their dissatisfaction thru empty boxes. On the contrary, Kebomas, which is close to the government center and has more complete facilities, tends to show greater support for the candidate pair. Ujungpangkah, as a coastal area, shows a more moderate pattern, where political choices are dispersed due to a combination of limited access and the adjustment of community expectations to the conditions of their region.

Theoretically, this finding aligns with the rational choice theory proposed by Anthony Downs in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957), which explains that voters act as rational actors who weigh the benefits and drawbacks of each political choice. Differences in distance from the center of government, access to infrastructure, and direct experience with public services influence voters' rational calculations. When the benefits of development are not felt evenly, voters tend to reject candidates by choosing the empty box as a form of evaluation of the government's performance.

Hypothesis Testing

This section presents hypothesis testing to determine the impact of dissatisfaction with the incumbent's performance on voting tendencies in the 2024 Gresik Regency Regional Election. The analysis uses multinomial logistic regression because the dependent variable consists of three categories: candidate pairs, empty box, and abstention. The tests include the omnibus test, goodness of fit, Wald test, as well as the interpretation of pseudo R^2 and odds ratio to ensure the model's feasibility. The results of this test are used to determine whether public dissatisfaction significantly influences the tendency to choose the blank box.

1. Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients

Table 2. Test Model Fitting Information

Model	Model Fitting Criteria -2 Log Likelihood	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
		Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	304.059			
Final	280.621	23.438	2	0.000

Source: Primary data, processed by the researcher (2025)

The Model Fitting Information results show that the -2 Log Likelihood value decreased from 304.059 (initial model) to 280.621 (final model), indicating an improvement in model fit after including the dissatisfaction variable. The Chi-Square value of 23.438 with Sig. 0.000 (< 0.05) indicates that the model is significant. Thus, the dissatisfaction variable affects voting behavior, and the model is suitable for further analysis.

Table 3. Likelihood Ratio Tests

Effect	Model Fitting Criteria -2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
		Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept	298.291	17.670	2	0.000
X	304.059	23.438	2	0.000

Source: Primary data, processed by the researcher (2025)

The results of the Likelihood Ratio Tests show that the dissatisfaction variable has a significant effect on the model, indicated by a Chi-Square value of 23.438 with Sig. 0.000 (< 0.05). This means that variable X contributes to differentiating respondents' choices. Meanwhile, the model without predictors (intercept) does not sufficiently explain the variation in choosing behavior. Thus, the dissatisfaction variable is an important predictor and deserves further analysis thru the Wald test and Odds Ratio.

2. Goodness of Fit Test

Table 4. Goodness of Fit Test

	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	273.012	276	0.540
Deviance	272.303	276	0.552

Source: Primary data, processed by the researcher (2025)

The results of the Goodness of Fit test show that the multinomial logistic regression model used in this study has very good feasibility. The significance value in the Pearson test was 0.540 and in the Deviance test was 0.552, both of which are above the threshold of 0.05. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the values predicted by the model and the actual observational data. Thus, the model can be considered fit and suitable for analyzing the influence of dissatisfaction with the incumbent's performance on voting tendencies in the 2024 Gresik Regency regional election. This model is capable of adequately representing the data, allowing

subsequent analysis results to be interpreted with a good level of confidence.

3. Koefisien Determinasi Test (Pseudo R²)

Table 5. Koefisien Determinasi Test

Cox and Snell	Nagelkerke	McFadden
0.145	0.165	0.075

Source: Primary data, processed by the researcher (2025)

The results of the Pseudo R² test show a Cox and Snell value of 0.145, a Nagelkerke value of 0.165, and a McFadden value of 0.075. These three values are not equivalent to R² in linear regression, but are used to assess the model's ability to explain the variation in the dependent variable. The most representative Nagelkerke value indicates that the model is able to explain approximately 16.5% of the variation in the tendency to choose the empty box based on the level of dissatisfaction with the incumbent's performance.

Cox and Snell value shows a consistent trend, albeit more conservatively, and the McFadden value of 0.075 still falls within the modest fit category commonly found in socio-political research. Overall, these results indicate that the model has a sufficient explanatory power, although it is not yet dominant, suggesting that there are other factors beyond the dissatisfaction variable that also influence voting tendencies in the 2024 Gresik Regency regional election.

4. Interpretasi Odds Ratio Test (Exp(B))

Table 6. Interpretasi Odds Ratio Test

PerilakuMemilih		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
								Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Kotak Kosong	Intercept	-3.567	0.924	14.904	1	0.000			
	X	0.523	0.118	19.492	1	0.000	1.687	1.337	2.127
Golput	Intercept	-2.714	1.014	7.169	1	0.007			
	X	0.320	0.131	5.935	1	0.015	1.377	1.065	1.782

Source: Primary data, processed by the researcher (2025)

The Odds Ratio (Exp(B)) results demonstrate that public dissatisfaction with incumbent

performance significantly influences voting behavior, particularly the propensity to vote for the blank box. In the blank-box category, the regression coefficient ($B = 0.523$, $p < 0.001$) and the odds ratio ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.687$) indicate that each one-unit increase in dissatisfaction increases the likelihood of voting for the blank box by 68.7% relative to voting for the candidate pair. The 95% confidence interval (1.337–2.127), which does not include the value of one, confirms that this effect is statistically stable and robust. By contrast, dissatisfaction also increases the likelihood of abstaining from voting ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.377$, $p = 0.015$), although the magnitude of this effect is considerably smaller. These findings suggest that dissatisfied voters are more likely to express their political evaluations through the blank box rather than by abstaining.

The logit models further reinforce this pattern. In the comparison between voting for the blank box and voting for the candidate pair, the negative intercept (-3.567) indicates that support for the candidate pair is more likely when dissatisfaction is absent. However, the positive regression coefficient (0.523) demonstrates that increasing dissatisfaction substantially raises the probability of selecting the blank box. A similar relationship is observed for abstention, although with a weaker coefficient (0.320), indicating that dissatisfaction encourages electoral withdrawal to some extent but more strongly motivates voters to use the blank box as an electoral alternative.

These findings support Anthony Downs' Rational Choice Theory, which argues that voters make electoral decisions based on retrospective evaluations of government performance. However, this study extends the theory by demonstrating that, in uncontested local elections, rational electoral behavior is not limited to choosing among competing candidates. When no alternative candidate is available, voters may instead use the blank box as a rational mechanism for expressing dissatisfaction and holding incumbents electorally accountable. Thus, the blank box functions not merely as a protest vote but as an instrument of democratic accountability.

The findings also both confirm and extend previous empirical studies. Consistent with (Stahlmann & Bleidorn, 2026) and Purwaningsih (2020), the results indicate that blank-box voting reflects rational political evaluation rather than political apathy. Likewise, Bangun and Raffiudin (2022) and Bayunta and Raffiudin (2023) found that retrospective evaluations of incumbent performance influence electoral decisions. Unlike these previous studies, however, the present study identifies public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance as a direct predictor of blank-box voting in an uncontested local election, thereby providing empirical evidence that retrospective performance evaluations remain influential even when electoral competition is absent.

The Gresik Regional Election also provides an important contextual contribution. Because Fandi Akhmad Yani had previously served as Regent of Gresik during the 2021–2024 administration, voters possessed direct experience in evaluating the incumbent's performance before the election. Consequently, the decision to vote for the blank box reflected an informed assessment of government performance rather than uncertainty arising from the absence of competing candidates. This finding implies that a high proportion of blank-box votes in uncontested elections should not automatically be interpreted as political apathy but rather as an expression of democratic accountability through rational electoral choice.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance is a significant determinant of blank box voting in the 2024 Gresik Regional Election. More broadly, the study contributes to the literature on electoral behavior by extending the application of Rational Choice Theory to uncontested elections and highlighting that blank box voting constitutes a rational mechanism through which citizens evaluate and sanction incumbent governments when electoral competition is unavailable.

Based on a series of multinomial logistic regression tests that have been conducted, the research results indicate that the variable of dissatisfaction with the incumbent's performance significantly affects the tendency to vote in the 2024 Gresik Regency regional election (A. Fauzi et al., 2018). The regression model used proved to be valid thru the Omnibus Test with a significance value of 0.000 and was supported by the Goodness of Fit test, which indicated that the model was consistent with the data. In addition, the Pseudo R^2 value of 16.5% indicates that dissatisfaction has a significant contribution in explaining the variation in choosing behavior, although there are still other factors outside the model that also have an impact.

The results of the parameter test (Wald Test) and Odds Ratio (Exp(B)) indicate that an increase in the level of dissatisfaction significantly raises the probability of the public choosing the empty box compared to choosing the candidate pair. Thus, the research hypothesis stating that dissatisfaction influences the tendency to choose the empty box can be accepted. These findings confirm that dissatisfaction is not only an emotional background but also serves as a determining factor in shaping the political behavior of society.

The findings can be explained thru the rational choice theory proposed by Anthony Downs, which states that voters act as rational actors who consider the benefits and costs in determining their political choices. In the context of this research, the people of Gresik evaluate the performance of the incumbent based on their experiences with public services, policies, and

government integrity. When the evaluation results indicate dissatisfaction, choosing a candidate pair is no longer considered to provide optimal utility.

In that framework, the empty box becomes a rational alternative choice. Voters do not immediately become apathetic; instead, they continue to actively participate by using their voting rights to reject the available candidates. This decision reflects a rational calculation, where voters assess that choosing the empty box provides greater political benefits compared to legitimizing the incumbent who is deemed unsatisfactory.

Furthermore, the analysis by sub-district shows that the condition of infrastructure and the quality of public services also affect the level of public dissatisfaction. Sub-districts with more limited access and facilities tend to show higher levels of dissatisfaction, which then leads to an increased tendency to choose the empty box. This reinforces the argument that the political choices of the public are not only influenced by individual preferences but also by the objective conditions they experience in their daily lives.

Thus, the results of this study not only empirically prove the influence of dissatisfaction on the tendency to choose the empty box but also reinforce the relevance of Anthony Downs' rational choice theory in explaining voter behavior in the context of local gubernatorial elections. Voters act strategically by maximizing their political utility, and the empty box becomes an instrument used to express critical evaluation of the incumbent's performance.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance significantly influences the propensity to vote for the blank box in the 2024 Gresik Regency Regional Election. The multinomial logistic regression results indicate that higher levels of dissatisfaction with public service quality, policy responsiveness, and government integrity increase voters' likelihood of choosing the blank box over the candidate pair. These findings suggest that evaluations of incumbent performance constitute an important determinant of electoral behavior in uncontested local elections.

The findings are consistent with Ilham and Purwaningsih (2020), who argue that blank-box voting reflects rational political evaluation rather than merely political apathy. Likewise, this study supports Bangun and Raffiudin (2022) and Bayunta and Raffiudin (2023), which emphasize that retrospective evaluations of government performance influence voters' political decisions. However, unlike these previous studies, this research specifically demonstrates that public dissatisfaction with incumbent performance is a direct predictor of blank-box voting in an uncontested local election, thereby

extending the application of Rational Choice Theory to electoral contexts where voters have no competing candidate.

The case of Gresik Regency further indicates that blank-box voting should not simply be interpreted as political apathy. Instead, it represents a rational mechanism of electoral accountability through which citizens evaluate incumbent performance and express political dissatisfaction when electoral competition is absent. These findings contribute to the literature on electoral behavior by highlighting incumbent performance evaluation as an important determinant of blank-box voting in uncontested local elections

Author Contributions: For research articles that have multiple authors, a brief paragraph must be included that explains the writer's contribution. Conceptualization, S. K. M and F. A.; Methodology, B. S.; Software, M. A. A.; Validation, S. K. M.; Formal analysis, F. A.; Investigation, M. A. A.; Resources, B. S.; Data turnover, S. K. M.; Writing-original drafts, M. A. A.; Writing-reviews and editing, B. S.;

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Declaration of Generative AI: During the preparation of this manuscript, generative artificial intelligence (AI) was used only to improve the language, grammar, and readability of the text. The AI tool was not used to formulate the research questions, identify or collect documentary sources, perform content analysis, interpret the findings, or develop the conclusions.

Acknowledgments: The authors express their sincere appreciation to the institutions and scholars whose published works and official documentary sources provided valuable insights for this study.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that they have no known competing financial, institutional, or personal interests that could have influenced the conduct of this research or the interpretation of its findings. The study was undertaken independently, and the conclusions presented are solely those of the authors.

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