

## Political Communication Strategy of Single Candidate: The Case of Wonosobo Regional Election 2020

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### Abstract

*Political communication strategy is very important in elections, both regional and national elections. Political communication strategies carried out by political parties or candidates include several things such as campaigns and collaboration with community groups. This was done to gain votes from the public. This study aims to determine the political communication strategy of a single candidate in the Wonosobo regional election. This research is qualitative research. The main subjects of this research are the main actors in the 2020 Wonosobo regional elections. The results show that a single candidate continues to carry out political communication strategies. The communication strategy is carried out in several ways including campaigning and also establishing cooperation with community groups. The campaigns carried out are generally in the form of installing banners or billboards, interviews with offline media and electronic media, and also visits to the public area. Meanwhile, collaborating with community groups is carried out by communicating between prospective leaders and group administrators, before finally withdrawing the votes of their members. This strategy success to bring the victory of single candidate on regional election in Wonosobo.*

**Keywords:** *communication strategies, election, single candidate, political communication*

### Introduction

Communication is the process of delivering messages from the communicator to the communicant/message recipient by using certain media (Mufid, 2010). Several disciplines that are closely related to communication are political science, sociology, psychology, history, rhetoric, and other sciences. Political communication has earned its place because of its consistency and related research. Political communication studies include; opinions, attitudes, beliefs, politics as a process, and media effects (Hasan, 2009).

Swanson and Nimmo (1990) in the book *New Direction in Political Communication* explained that communication in the political process is a strategy of using communication to influence, believe and act in politics. Other experts state that political communication is "any form of exchange of symbols or messages that reaches a certain level to be influenced or influenced as a function in the political system" as stated by Meadow in Pawito (2009). Gazali (2004) said that the functions of political communication are: to reduce uncertainty, for the

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benefit of society in politics (prospective public policies), communication is used as a tool to predict, and the last is to plan and explain communication strategies. Political communication strategy is not only limited to political marketing activities but also in local government, it is related to the exchange of messages with the community that is sustainable in decision making (Kariryaa et al., 2020).

The development of political communication science is currently leading to political marketing. In particular, political marketing discusses how to sell a political product, which includes discussing policies, parties, and candidates to sell them to the public. According to Lees, political marketing does not only discuss how to campaign but also discusses the policies of politicians or their organizations in designing their policies so that they can be accepted by the public (Lees-Marshment, 2001). One example is the process of political communication in the Indonesia 2020 simultaneous regional head elections (or known as *pilkada* in Bahasa Indonesia).

Regional head elections are one way in a democracy that is carried out to obtain fair, clean, honest, competent leadership which is held transparently and responsibly according to the applicable legal basis. This is regulated in Law No. 8 of 2015 concerning amendments to Law No. 1 of 2015 concerning the application of government regulations Law No. 1 of 2014 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents and Mayors became the Regional Election Law with the material claiming a minimum requirement of two pairs of candidates in the *Pilkada*. After going through a lawsuit, the Constitutional Court issued Decision Number 100/PUU-XIII/2015 deciding that there must be a match against a single candidate pair, and then it is regulated by Law No. 10 of 2016 concerning the Election of Governor and Deputy Governor, Regent and Deputy Regent, Mayor and Deputy Mayor. In fact, this rule change actually increases the number of single candidates (Rahmanto, 2018).

In the process of regional head election, every citizen has the right to directly elect their leader according to their beliefs and assessments of the candidates proposed by each party or coalition of parties, or who run from the independent path by fulfilling certain conditions. However, there will be some negative impacts if there is only one candidate or single candidate in the election, such as the decrease in the number of voters exercising their voting rights (Prilani & Hutomo 2020).

The phenomenon of a single candidate in regional head elections that conducted simultaneously in Indonesia has occurred since 2015 with three single candidates. In 2018

there were 18 regional elections with a single candidate. Until 2020, there are 25 regions that have a single candidate (Prilani & Hutomo 2020), including the Wonosobo Region, Central Java Province - Indonesia. However, the national average participation rate in the 2020 Election with the same number of regions as the previous year in 2015, namely 269 regions, an increase of 7.03 percent whether at the Provincial, Regional, or City (Mashabi, 2020).

Several aspects affect the increase in voter turnout, one of which is the candidate's communication strategy, namely the campaign (Nur, 2019). Various opinions say that a single candidate can be allowed by consensus and acclamation, although other opinions consider that it is very sudden because Law Number 8 of 2015 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors which regulates regional head elections has only been passed in the last few months, so that there is no anticipation of various things such as a single candidate and party dualism by the Pilkada Law and this situation greatly affects the implementation of the Pilkada.

The background above shows the importance of research that aims to determine the political communication of a single candidate in the regional election to the community, especially in the Wonosobo Region.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Political Communication***

Theocharis and Jungherr (2021) define political communication as a form of communication to be directed at achieving an influence or also called to influence a group or society. So that in his discussion of all activities within the scope of communication can bind all citizens through a sanction that has been determined by political institutions.

Furthermore, Street (2020) argues that political communication is a form of delivering a message, whether described using symbols or in written form, either verbally or in the form of signs. With the aim of being able to influence the position of someone who is in a certain power structure. Meanwhile, Sánchez Medero (2020) broadly defines that political communication as a type of delivery of messages or information related to politics from a source to the recipients of the message.

Meanwhile, Graber (2005) defines political communication as, "the construction, sending, receiving, and processing of messages that have the potential to have a significant direct or indirect impact on politics. And according to Kaid (2004), so far, the best definition

of political communication is Chaffee's (1975) simple expression that political communication is the role of communication in the political process. The use (science) of communication in the political process. Swanson and Nimmo (1990) in "New Direction in Political Communication", assert that mainstream political communication is the study of strategies for using communication to influence public knowledge, belief, and political action. Political communication functions include: (1) Reducing uncertainty, (2) For the public interest (prospective public policies), (3) As a tool for predicting and, (4) Planning and explaining strategic communication.

### ***Political Communication Strategy***

The purpose of literature review is to "look again" (re + view) at what other researchers have done about the topic discussed (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:70). A good literature review should not just be a summary. In this case, the author is expected to critically evaluate and synthesize the work of others.

Strategy in communication science is a way to organize the implementation of communication operations to be successful. In essence, a communication strategy is planning and management to achieve something. Thus the strategy is not only become a road map that shows direction, but also must be able to show an operational tactic (Abidin, 2015). Strategy is also a priority taken from each organization regarding various ways and plan options in achieving an organization's mission (Nounkeu, 2020). This purposes could be achieved through three strategic stages, namely: planning, implementing, and evaluating strategies (Sasilo et al., 2020).

De Bruycker and Rooduijn (2021) explain the definition of strategy as follows: the first is that strategy is a plan, where strategy is a concept of a planned program (a directed course of action) in achieving predetermined goals. The second is the pattern, where the pattern is a past behavior that is consistent and does not change. In implementing the strategy, the most important thing is the awareness of all those involved by using a planned or intended strategy. What is a different pattern from intending or intending, strategy as a pattern refers more to something that just appears (emergent)? Third, Strategy is a position. It can be interpreted in a way or step in determining a brand, product, or company position in the market. Based on the conceptual framework of users and policymakers, the main strategy has been determined by external factors. Fourth, strategy is a tactic (play), where it is an attack that is planned to make the opponent beguiled or amazed (competitor). Then the last is a perspective strategy

(perspective) which can be interpreted as a step in implementing a strategy based on theory by using reasonable thinking power from the content of rational or ideological ways of thinking.

### ***Political Campaign Strategy***

The campaign or *kampanye* in Indonesian comes from English, namely the campaign (Liebhart & Bernhardt, 2017). Bossetta (2018) described that the campaign is a series of communication activities between organizations with the aim of creating a certain impact, on the majority of the target audience on an ongoing basis within a certain period. While relating to political campaigns, political campaigns are one of the agendas in political communication activities in the election process, post-conflict local elections, presidential elections which have their own regulations, which include schedules, procedures, supervision, and sanctions in case of violations (Kreiss & McGregor, 2018).

In political campaigns, political communicators are often called Jurkam (campaign officials) who must be registered with the general election commission (Rahyadi & Aras, 2020). Campaigners have the responsibilities, in this case, formulating ideas, campaign themes, making plans to achieve goals that are effective and efficient in building a political image, and influencing, forming, and fostering positive public opinion (Chester & Montgomery, 2019). In addition, Jurkam and success teams are also required to design campaign models, both in offline and online campaign models (Chester & Montgomery, 2017). Form campaign channels by utilizing technology and new media types that are often used by political actors into new, more innovative forms, for example: First, Social Media. Social media is a web-based online media that is easy for users to participate in, from sharing information, creating message content to distributing it on social media accounts (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). Not only that, social media allows people to interact in relationships between communities.

### **Methods**

This research used a qualitative method to explain, describe and understand social phenomena from the point of view or perspective of the subject. The subjects in the study were an advisor to the campaign team and a volunteer team for candidate pairs. The approach of this study is a case study design, in which the researcher investigates a bound system (cases) or multiple bound systems (cases) from time to time, through detailed and in-depth

data collection involving several sources. information (eg, observations, interviews, audiovisuals). Materials and documents and reports), and reporting case-based descriptions and themes (Creswell, 2007).

Case study is the method of research that examines contemporary phenomena as a whole and comprehensively in actual conditions, in other words, that the case to be studied is currently or has been completed, but still has an impact. Sources of data used in the study, namely: primary data and secondary data.

Primary data were obtained by researchers through field notes, recorded words obtained from in-depth interviews with seven informants from a single candidate post. To obtain secondary data, the researcher will use journal literature, literature study, and documentation. To obtain primary data, the researcher used an interview guide to conduct in-depth interview techniques.

## **Discussion**

The occurrence of a single candidate in the 2020 regional head election in Wonosobo was against the backdrop of the merging of seven parties that won seats in the DPRD. These parties include PDIP, PKB, GOLKAR, NASDEM, HANURA, DEMOKRAT, and PAN, where this is in accordance with the provisions of General Election Commission (PKPU) Regulation Number 3 of 2017 concerning Nominations in the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors, which states that the requirements for submission Regent candidates must obtain the support of 20% of the seats in the DPRD or 25% of valid votes in the previous election. From these provisions, the candidate pair for Afif Albar received the support of 35 seats in the DPRD. Meanwhile, there were three parties that did not join Afif Albar's coalition, namely Gerindra, Perindo, PPP where in terms of seats the three parties could join forces to nominate the regent and deputy regent themselves.

Seeing this fact, Wonosobo should have had two pairs of candidates in the 2020 regional head election, but at the Wonosobo KPUD nomination stage, only one pair of candidates registered. Therefore, in accordance with Article 102 of PKPU Number 3 of 2017 concerning Nominations which states that if there is one pair of candidates, the KPUD is required to extend the registration period for regent candidates for three days. In the extension of registration, it was found that one party (PPP) registered its candidate pair but was rejected due to a lack of support for seats in the DPRD. The occurrence of a single candidate was also

influenced by the Gerindra party which chose to be neutral, in other words, Gerindra did not carry a candidate pair in the 2020 Wonosobo regional head election.

The single candidate pair was determined by the Wonosobo KPUD in the 2020 regional election then campaigned for the community. Where the campaign, a single candidate pair uses a strategy in the regional election, it greatly influences voters which aim to shape voter behavior (Tilome et al., 2020). The pair Afif Nurhidayat and M Albar excelled in gaining votes while defeating empty columns in the 2020 Wonosobo Regent and Deputy Regent Elections. This was because the candidate pairs relied more on the power of political communication woven with the community.

Based on the results of the interviews, it can be stated that the political communication strategy of the winning team of Afif Nurhidayat and M Albar (AA) was carried out by an approach consisting of the selection of communicators. In conducting downward communication in this case the community, the Campaign Team of the AA Candidate Pairs cooperated with volunteers to go directly to the community to convey the vision and mission of the AA candidate pairs. One of the patterns was to involve the administrators of the Wonosobo Small Sword Community (KOMPAK) to disseminate the vision and mission of the AA candidate pair to KOMPAK members throughout the Wonosobo Region.

Referring to the theory presented by De Bruycker & Rooduijn (2021) that related to the definition of strategy, one of them is a pattern, where the pattern is a past behavior that is consistent and does not change. The opinion above is in accordance with what happened in the campaign activities of the AA Candidate Pair. Seeing the pattern that occurred in Wonosobo Regency in the context of practical politics for 5 years, it always uses a pattern, where the Campaign Team always cooperates with communities or organizations that have a large number of members, such as KOMPAK. According to the informant, that KOMPAK members were spread across 15 sub-districts throughout Wonosobo Regency, meaning that all small traders in the Wonosobo Regency area are KOMPAK members. Seeing the large number of members scattered throughout the Wonosobo area, it is not surprising that the AA Candidate Pair / Campaign Team collaborated with KOMPAK to help make AA's victory in the 2020 regional elections a success.

The explanations above show that there are various ways that a single candidate can do to get people's votes. In the end, it can be concluded that it is very important to know what kind of communication strategy is used by a single candidate to the community. Because the

candidate pair only got 269,789 votes, while the empty column that didn't exist got 153,605 votes. The two votes came from a total of 423,394 valid votes. So from here, it can be seen that the empty column gets quite a lot of votes. If the single candidate's communication strategy is not improved in subsequent elections, empty votes can get a larger number of votes so that the votes obtained are not sufficient for a single candidate's victory.

## Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the political communication strategy was still carried out even though there was only one candidate in the regional head election. The communication strategy was carried out to gain victory because even though there was a single candidate, they still had to get more votes than the empty box. The communication strategy was carried out in several ways including campaigning and also establishing cooperation with community groups. The campaigns carried out were generally in the form of installing banners or billboards, interviews with offline media and electronic media, and also visits to the public area. Meanwhile, collaborating with community groups was carried out by communicating between prospective leaders and group administrators, before finally withdrawing the votes of their members. This strategy success to bring them the victory of regional election in Wonosobo on the year of 2020. At the end, this research shows that even though the general election only had a single candidate, the single candidate still had to have a good communication strategy to get people's votes. If not, then there will be a lot of empty votes and it is feared that they will not be sufficient for the victory of a single candidate, which of course is detrimental in terms of budget, time, and energy consumption.

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