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Muhammad Sinen's Political Communication Strategy In Maintaining Electability Towards The 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections (case Study: Muhamad Sinen as Elected Mayor of Tidore City, North Maluku Province)

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Abstract

The implementation of political communication strategies requires the need for the right approach so that political messages can be effectively accepted by the public, especially in areas with complex social, cultural, and political dynamics. This research aims to analyze the political communication strategies carried out by Muhammad Sinen in building an image, shaping public opinion, and strengthening political support in the City of Tidore Islands. The research method used is a qualitative approach with case studies, where data is obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, documentation, and literature review involving informants from various circles, including community leaders, success teams, and the general public. The results of the study show that the communication strategies used, such as face-to-face communication, the use of social media, social activities, and communication based on local wisdom, have proven to be effective in expanding the reach of political messages and strengthening closeness with the community. The obstacles faced include limited communication infrastructure, resistance from some groups, and local political dynamics that often change. The integration of local cultural values such as family, mutual cooperation, and respect for traditional leaders strengthens communication strategies so that they are more persuasive, inclusive, and able to build public trust. The findings of this study prove that the combination of modern communication media and local cultural values can increase the effectiveness of political communication strategies and strengthen the community's support base.

Keywords: communication strategy, political communication, local culture, Muhammad Sinen,

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Tidore Islands City.

INTRODUCTION

The election of Regional Heads (Pilkada) is one of the tangible manifestations of the democratic party at the local level that provides opportunities for the public to directly elect their regional leaders. Since the enactment of Law No. 32 of 2004 concerning Regional Government, which was later strengthened by Law No. 1 of 2005, the mechanism of the Regional Elections has changed significantly to be more democratic because it is carried out directly by the people (Ulum, 2021). This change in regulations marks a new chapter in the journey of Indonesian democracy, where the people are given a central role in determining the direction of their regional development.

The local democracy party is not only a means for people to exercise their right to vote, but also a space for political competition that is full of strategies, communication, and narratives built by candidates. The regional elections are a political arena that involves various actors, ranging from regional head candidates, political parties, community leaders, to the voters themselves. In this context, political communication plays an important role because it determines how the candidate's message is conveyed and received by the public (Arifulloh, 2015).

North Maluku Province, especially Tidore Islands City, is one of the regions that will hold simultaneous regional elections in 2024. In the contest, two main candidates appeared, namely the Muhammad Sinen–Ahmad Laiman (MASI AMAN) couple and the Syamsul Rizal Hasdy–Adam Dano Djafar (SAMADA) pair. Muhammad Sinen, who previously served as Deputy Mayor of Tidore for two terms, is running as a mayoral candidate with a track record of leadership and closeness to the community.

The competition in the 2024 Tidore Islands Regional Election is fierce because it is colored by slander, polarization, and personal attacks between camps. Campaigns that are supposed to be a forum for discussing development ideas are often reduced to political rhetoric that brings down opponents (PostTimur.com, 2024). This phenomenon is certainly unfortunate because it diverts public attention from substantial issues, such as local economic development, improving public services, and developing regional tourism.

Such conditions make the community faced with a political dilemma, where the information they receive is not always oriented to work programs, but to offensive narratives. In fact, the people's participation in the Regional Elections does not only stop at voting, but also at active involvement in supervising the running of local government. This is in line with the view that democracy is the government of the people, by the people, and for the people (Fakhid &

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Faizal, 2017).

In addition, the 2024 Tidore Islands Regional Election is also influenced by changes in voter behavior, especially the dominance of the younger generation. Data from the KPU states that more than 58% of voters come from generation Z and millennials (Bitvonline.com, 2024). This condition requires candidates to be able to adjust their political communication strategies to the characteristics of young voters who tend to be critical, rational, and close to digital technology.

Digital transformation is also an important factor in this election. The presence of social media, especially platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, opens up new spaces for political communication. Candidates not only convey their vision and mission through face-to-face campaigns, but also utilize digital media to reach voters more widely (Ratnamulyani & Maksudi, 2018). This change in the political communication landscape requires candidates to have skills in managing digital content so that their political messages are effectively conveyed.

Muhammad Sinen, as one of the candidates, actively uses YouTube social media to upload campaign activities, convey work programs, and show his involvement with the community. This strategy not only builds self-image, but also strengthens emotional relationships with voters. Campaign content that is relevant to the reality of society is the key to attracting public attention (Hidayatullah et al., 2024).

However, the use of social media also presents new challenges. The number of destructive attacks in the form of hoaxes and slander through digital media has the potential to create deeper polarization in society. This threatens the substance of the Regional Elections because voters can be trapped in misleading information. For the MASI AMAN couple, this challenge must be answered with the right communication strategy so that electability is maintained.

In the world of politics, electability is often understood as the level of interest or likelihood of people to choose a candidate. Electability is an important indicator in measuring the chances of victory in political contests (Billy et al., 2019). Therefore, the right communication strategy is needed to maintain and even increase the electability of a candidate for regional head.

Muhammad Sinen, as an incumbent candidate, has a fairly high electability capital thanks to his track record as Deputy Mayor. A survey by the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) shows that the level of public recognition and liking for him is close to perfect, thus increasing his chances of victory (TribunTernate.com, 2024). However, this electability capital still requires a sustainable communication strategy so that it can be maintained until voting day.

An effective political communication strategy is believed to be able to build a positive image, increase public trust, and expand the political support base. In the context of the 2024 Tidore Islands Regional Elections, this strategy includes interpersonal communication with the

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community and the use of social media to reach a wider audience. The combination of these two approaches is expected to strengthen the candidate's position in the eyes of the public.

Interpersonal communication is important because it allows for more personal and emotional face-to-face interactions between candidates and the community. This approach is believed to be able to foster trust and emotional closeness that is social capital for candidates (DeVito, 2018). In this case, Muhammad Sinen often holds direct meetings with the community, attends local events, and builds open dialogue with his constituents.

On the other hand, communication through social media offers greater speed and reach. Through YouTube, campaign content can be accessed anytime and anywhere by the public, especially young voters who are familiar with digital technology (Munfida et al., 2023). This makes social media an important instrument in shaping public perception of candidates.

The urgency of research on Muhammad Sinen's political communication strategy in maintaining electability lies in how he integrates interpersonal communication with digital communication. This phenomenon is interesting to research because it provides an idea of how a regional candidate is able to adapt to the ever-evolving political and technological dynamics.

Academically, this research contributes to the development of communication science, especially in the study of political communication. The results of the study can enrich the understanding of effective communication strategies in maintaining the electability of candidates in local political contests. In addition, this research also provides practical contributions for politicians, political parties, and political communication practitioners in designing relevant campaign strategies.

For the public, this research is expected to be able to provide a more critical understanding of the importance of assessing candidates based on the vision, mission, and work programs offered, not solely based on negative narratives that develop in the public space. Thus, people can be wiser in using their voting rights.

From this description, it is clear that political communication cannot be seen as a complementary aspect in the Regional Elections, but as the main element that determines the success of a candidate. Therefore, this study will focus on the political communication strategy carried out by Muhammad Sinen to maintain his electability in the 2024 simultaneous regional elections in Tidore Islands City.

The purpose of the research entitled "*Muhammad Sinen's Political Communication Strategy in Maintaining Electability Towards the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections*" is to analyze the political communication strategy used by Muhammad Sinen in maintaining his electability as a candidate in the Tidore Islands City Elections, especially through interpersonal

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communication and the use of social media, as well as identifying the roles, effectiveness, and challenges of these communication strategies in building political image and public trust.

PROBLEM FORMULATION

Based on the available literature, there is a formulation of problems that can be explained in this study, namely:

1. How is Muhammad Sinen's political communication in maintaining electability towards the 2024 regional elections?
2. What is Muhammad Sinen's political communication strategy in building his image in the public?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretically, this study combines four main perspectives, namely:

1. Political Communication Theory (Arifin, 2011; Nimmo, 2011; Cangara, 2023) which describes the process of conveying political messages to build an image, influence public opinion, and gain political support. This theory is used to analyze how Muhammad Sinen compiles his political message in maintaining electability in the 2024 Regional Elections.
2. Political Communication Strategy (Anwar Arifin, 2011) which emphasizes the importance of targeted communication planning, both through interpersonal communication and the use of social media. This perspective helps to outline the steps taken by Muhammad Sinen to maintain his image, create togetherness, and build political consensus.
3. Interpersonal Communication Theory (DeVito, 2018) which emphasizes openness, empathy, support, and equality in face-to-face relationships. This theory is used to explain Muhammad Sinen's direct interaction with the people of Tidore, including dialogical campaign activities, face-to-face meetings, and political lobbying.
4. Social Media in Political Communication (Kent, 2013; Munfida et al., 2023) who view digital media as an effective means to expand the reach of political communication. This theory is used to analyze how Muhammad Sinen uses YouTube and other social media platforms to deliver work programs, build an image, and maintain closeness with constituents, especially the younger generation.

As a reinforcement of this journal, previous research references are:

a.) Damarjati Dimara, Mubarok, & Kurdaningsi (2024). Political Communication Strategy of Local Legislators in Maintaining Electability in Semarang City. Journal of Southeast Asian Studies,

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5(1).

This study shows the success of local legislators in maintaining electability through political communication strategies based on social activities such as e-sports tournaments, MSME bazaars, and cultural carnivals. The relevance to this study is the use of political communication strategies to maintain public support, although this research focuses on the legislative scope, while this research focuses on the executive elections in the Tidore Islands.

b.) Yoseva Millenia Rahma Jone (2022). Incumbent Communication Strategy in Maintaining Electability in the 2020 West Kutai Regional Election. Journal of Government Science, 10(4).

This research emphasizes the incumbent's communication strategy through vision, mission, and development programs. The results show that dialogue communication with community leaders is the key to maintaining voices. The difference is that this study highlights more aspects of local campaigns in West Kutai, while the current research emphasizes a combination of interpersonal communication and social media.

c.) Nadia Zuhra Karla Lubis, Rosita Anggraini, & Tagor (2022). Political Communication Strategy of PDI Perjuangan. Journal of Communication and Business, 10(1).

This study discusses political party communication strategies in increasing party electability in national elections. The main focus is on party branding, while this research is more on the personal branding of the candidate (Muhammad Sinen). The similarity between the two is that they both use political communication to maintain public support.

d.) Hamza, Ade Irwan (2021). Communication Strategy of the Palembang City KPU in Increasing Voter Participation in the Simultaneous Regional Elections. Journal of Communication Dimensions, 2(2).

This study highlights the communication strategy of election organizing institutions in increasing voter participation. Its relevance lies in how communication strategies can affect people's political behavior. The difference is that this research focuses on the organizing institution, while this research focuses on candidates.

e.) Yans Hamadi (2024). Social Media Strategy of Regional Heads in Building a Positive Image. Journal of Communication, 4(2).

This research emphasizes the importance of social media as a means of building a positive image of regional heads through active interaction with the community. The relevance is very strong to this research, because Muhammad Sinen also used YouTube as the main medium of his campaign. The difference is that this study adds an analysis of interpersonal communication as a strategy that complements the use of social media.

f.) Jayus, Sumaiyah, Desy Mairita, & Assyari Abdullah (2024). Social Media as a Political Campaign

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Media Ahead of the 2024 Election. Journal of Symbolism, 10(1).

This study found that social media plays an important role in modern political campaigns. The main challenge is the emergence of misinformation. This research is directly related because Muhammad Sinen also faced hoaxes and slander attacks on social media.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. This approach was chosen because the research is directed to understand in depth Muhammad Sinen's political communication strategy in maintaining electability ahead of the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections in Tidore Islands City. The qualitative approach is considered relevant because it allows researchers to explore phenomena holistically, narratively, and contextually (Moleong, 2018). Meanwhile, the case study method was chosen because it is in accordance with the research objectives that want to explore a particular case in detail using various sources of information such as interviews, observations, and documentation (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2010).

The research paradigm used is constructivism, which views social reality as a construct that is shaped through social interaction and individual experience. This paradigm emphasizes that voters do not only passively receive information, but actively interpret and construct meaning based on their experiences and social contexts (Neuman, 2003; Creswell et al., 2014). Therefore, Muhammad Sinen's political communication strategy is understood not only as a normative activity, but also as a meaning formed through the candidate's interaction with the community.

The location of the research is in Tidore Islands City, North Maluku Province, with a focus on Muhammad Sinen's political communication activities as the elected Mayor and candidate for the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections. The subjects of the study are divided into two categories, namely the main actors and supporting informants. The main actor is Muhammad Sinen, while the supporting informants include the success team, community leaders, academics, youth leaders, local media, and voters who have interacted directly with the candidate either face-to-face or through social media.

Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with Muhammad Sinen, the winning team, community leaders, and voters to dig up information related to political communication strategies. Observations were made on face-to-face campaign activities and those displayed through social media such as YouTube. Documentation is used to strengthen data through online news collection, social media content, campaign video recordings, KPU official documents, and relevant electability survey results.

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The data analysis uses the model of Miles & Huberman (1992) in Sugiyono (2017), which includes four stages, namely: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn/verification. This process is done interactively and continues continuously until the data is considered saturated. With this method, the research is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive picture of Muhammad Sinen's political communication strategy, both through interpersonal communication and the use of social media, and the extent to which these strategies affect his electability in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections in Tidore Islands City.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types and Effectiveness of Communication Media Used

In the practice of political communication Muhammad Sinen, the communication media used are very diverse and adaptive to the social conditions of the people of Tidore Islands. The main media used is face-to-face, which is done by visiting residents' homes, attending religious events, and engaging in social activities. This face-to-face communication pattern is considered the most effective means because the people of Tidore still view the importance of direct interaction, which brings warmth and builds personal trust.

In addition to face-to-face, social media is one of the strategic instruments used by Muhammad Sinen. Through the Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube platforms, he is able to reach a wider group of voters, especially the younger generation who are active in the digital space. The content uploaded is not only in the form of campaign posters, but also videos of activities, short political messages, and documentation of daily activities that strengthen his image as a popular figure.

Not only relying on face-to-face and social media, Muhammad Sinen also uses the local media of North Maluku as his political communication channel. Online news portals and local print media play a role in giving legitimacy and strengthening its political image. Publications about his activities and ideas made Muhammad Sinen's political message have a wider reach and be trusted because it appeared in formal media channels. This is important to strengthen electability, because mass media is still the main source of information for some people.

On the other hand, Muhammad Sinen's political communication also utilizes informal communication networks. Through small discussion groups, social gatherings, and indigenous peoples' associations, political information is disseminated effectively. This informal communication mechanism shows that the communication strategy carried out is able to adapt to the culture of the Tidore community, where the spread of messages is easier to accept if it passes through informal figures or communities.

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Overall, the effectiveness of the communication media used by Muhammad Sinen can be seen from how the public receives and understands his political message. Although there are limitations in the speed of message delivery in some areas, the combination of face-to-face communication, social media, local media, and informal networks makes this communication strategy quite effective. This confirms that Muhammad Sinen is able to integrate various communication channels according to the needs of different communities.

Obstacles and Challenges

Muhammad Sinen's political communication strategy is not spared from various obstacles and challenges. The most prominent obstacle is the limitation of communication infrastructure in some areas of the Tidore Islands. Uneven internet access causes political information disseminated through social media to not always be accepted quickly by all levels of society. This results in people in areas with limited access relying more on face-to-face communication.

Another obstacle arises from the internal limitations of the winning team. Not all team members are able to maintain consistency in distributing information to the public. This causes a difference in the speed of message delivery: there are groups of people who receive information quickly, but others who get it too late. This condition has the potential to give rise to misunderstandings at the voter level.

In addition to internal factors, there are also challenges from the external side, namely the political literacy of diverse communities. Most voters understand political messages simply and practically, but not all have the capacity to digest the messages conveyed through digital media. This difference in literacy often causes bias or misinterpretation of the message intended by Muhammad Sinen.

The obstacle also comes from the limited time of delivering political messages. Some informants mentioned that political messages are often conveyed close to the time of the implementation of activities, so that the public does not have enough time to understand or follow up on the message. This time constraint creates a sense of urgency that can affect the quality of political communication.

In addition, there are also challenges in the form of differences in perceptions between community groups. The same message is often understood differently by groups with different social and political backgrounds. In fact, political opponents can take advantage of this difference in interpretation to weaken the communication message conveyed by Muhammad Sinen. Thus, these obstacles and challenges demand a more adaptive and responsive communication strategy.

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Fagogoru's Philosophy-Based Communication Strategy

To deal with the existing obstacles, Muhammad Sinen applies a communication strategy that emphasizes personal closeness to the community. He was directly present in various community activities, ranging from customary, religious, to social gatherings. His presence in public spaces makes communication feel more familiar and natural, and strengthens his image as a leader who is close to the people.

This strategy is also enriched by the approach of the local culture of Tidore, which upholds the principle of living in the basudara people or living in brotherhood. This cultural value became the basis for Muhammad Sinen's political communication, where he always emphasized togetherness, solidarity, and mutual respect in every interaction with the community. Thus, the political message he conveyed was not only technical, but also emotionally and culturally charged.

This approach is in line with the theory of Symmetrical Two-Way Communication (Grunig & Hunt), where communication is not top-down, but rather opens up space for the community to give feedback. Muhammad Sinen not only conveys political programs or promises, but also listens to criticism, aspirations, and needs of the community. This creates more equal and participatory communication.

In addition, this culture-based communication strategy strengthens Muhammad Sinen's social legitimacy. By prioritizing the values of brotherhood and respect, the community sees him as a leader who understands and appreciates local traditions. This makes political messages easier to accept because they do not contradict the social values that are already alive in society.

The main strength of this strategy is its ability to combine interpersonal communication with modern media. On the one hand, social media expands the reach of messages; On the other hand, culture-based personal closeness strengthens the acceptance of messages. This combination makes Muhammad Sinen's political communication stronger and more effective in maintaining electability.

Integrative Analysis

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that Muhammad Sinen's political communication strategy is integrative, namely combining technical and cultural aspects. From a technical aspect, the use of social media, face-to-face, and local media has succeeded in expanding the reach of messages. From the cultural aspect, the application of the life values of the basudara people and the interpersonal approach strengthen the acceptance of messages in the community.

Communication barriers in the form of delays in message delivery, low political literacy,

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and limited infrastructure do not completely weaken the effectiveness of the strategy. Instead, these obstacles can be minimized through a personal closeness-based approach. This shows that social relations are still a major factor in the effectiveness of political communication at the local level.

Integrative analysis also shows that Muhammad Sinen's simple, humble, and open communication style reinforces his leadership image. People see him as a figure who is not only good at speaking, but also able to listen. This is important in building public trust, which ultimately contributes to increased electability.

In addition, the combination of modern media and local cultural values creates a balance between modernity and tradition. Modern media allows political information to reach the wider public quickly, while cultural values ensure that the message is received with trust and legitimacy.

Thus, Muhammad Sinen's political communication strategy can be used as an example of effective local political communication practices. This strategy not only maintains electability, but also strengthens social ties between leaders and the community. The integration between modern communication technology and local wisdom is the main key to his political success ahead of the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections in Tidore Islands City.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the effectiveness of Muhammad Sinen's political communication strategy in maintaining electability towards the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections in Tidore Islands City is influenced by two main aspects, namely the use of modern communication media and the integration of Tidore local cultural values. The use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube expands the reach of political messages, while face-to-face communication maintains personal closeness to the community. The integration of cultural values such as the birth of the people (brotherhood), respect and politeness in interaction, simplicity in language, and social solidarity strengthen the legitimacy of communication so that political messages are not only conveyed, but also received with trust.

The integration of modern media with local cultural values makes Muhammad Sinen's communication strategy more effective and adaptive. The people of Tidore feel valued and involved, not just being the object of the campaign, so as to create a harmonious communication atmosphere, reduce the potential for misunderstandings, and increase public trust. With this approach, Muhammad Sinen's political communication not only builds an electoral image, but also strengthens emotional and social ties with society. This is an important factor in maintaining and increasing his electability as a candidate for Mayor of Tidore Islands in the 2024 Simultaneous

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Regional Elections.

SUGGESTION

For the Muhammad Sinen Winning Team: it is necessary to increase the use of more varied communication media, especially strengthening digital content on social media to reach young voters, as well as maintaining the consistency of the political messages conveyed so as not to cause misunderstandings. In addition, the quality of political communicators, both candidates and successful teams, needs to be improved so that the delivery of messages remains in harmony with Tidore's local cultural values such as the lives of the people of Basudara, respect, and simplicity, so that the legitimacy of communication is maintained.

For further research: it is recommended to be able to research the effectiveness of the use of certain social media in local political communication, or to compare political communication strategies in other regions with different cultural characteristics. Research can also be directed to other sectors, such as the role of political communication in local government after the candidate is elected, so that it can provide a more comprehensive picture of the continuity of communication strategies from the campaign stage to the leadership period.

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