

Political Communication of Candidates in Earning Voter Support during the Covid-19 Pandemic

(Study on Regional Head Election of Rokan Hulu Regency, Indonesia in 2020)

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ABSTRACT: *This research describes the political communication of candidates to reach the support from voter during the Covid-19 pandemic in the Rokan Hulu regional head election 2020. To analyze it, Raymond Bauer's (1964) headstone (kepala batu) theory is used, with qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative approach is used to explain the political messages conveyed by candidates to voters and to map the suitability of the political messages of the candidates needs of voters, while the quantitative approach is to describe the types and levels of the voter needs. The research findings are (1) Several messages of political candidates has paid attention to the problems and the voters' need (2) The voters' needs are still in basic problems such as infrastructure, employment, business capital, school facilities, agricultural and livestock assistance and sports facilities (3) The candidates who post programs according to voters' need will not automatically get majority support from the voters. The political candidate's message is not the sole reason for voters to make a decision*

KEYWORDS: *Candidates, Political Communication, The voters*

I. INTRODUCTION

Political communication is a communication activity in the form of delivering political messages with the aim of influencing audiences (political targets). [1] Political messages contain power, decision making, public policy, and distribution of resources. [2] call political messages as political talk in the form of words, pictures, paintings, photographs, films, gestures, facial expressions, and all ways of acting. A political message is a verbal or nonverbal statement which is conveyed openly or hiddenly, whether consciously or not with political weight [3]. Political communication is a communication process that has political implications and has political consequences. In that sense, political communication is carried out to achieve political goals [4]. Actors who carry out political communication are politicians and political actors [5]. Regional head elections are the most important instrument in a country that adheres to a democratic system, because through elections people can participate in determining their leaders. Democratic elections are elections in which there is competition in fighting for and maintaining power, community participation and guarantees of civil and political rights [6]. The existence of a regional head election is expected to produce credible leaders supported by the people. Regional head elections can open up space for public participation in the democratic process, especially in determining leaders at the local level. Regional head elections have provided opportunities for the community to better actualize their political rights, so that the elected regional heads also have strong political and social legitimacy [7].

A regional head election can take place effectively determined by several factors. According to [8] there are four determining factors for the effective implementation of regional head elections, namely voter rationality, technical elements of elections (nomination mechanisms and selection of candidates), election performance

(KPU), and accountability mechanisms and public accountability assessments. In a regional head election, political messages are known as political promises. A statement submitted by a candidate to voters in either verbal or nonverbal form during the campaign period. Candidates can deliver political promises directly through face-to-face or indirectly using media including outdoor media, such as banners, billboards and billboards; mass media both print and electronic, social media and other media.

The choice of media that is always visible during the campaign period is outdoor media in the form of banners, billboards and billboards. Candidate political promises such as jargon, vision and mission as well as programs are expressed in outdoor media with various creative forms. Vision as a central component of all great leadership which contains statements about the conditions and situations of the ideal society to be created [9]. In addition, social media is also the channel of choice, especially in the 2020 regional elections. The use of social media is considered to be more effective and efficient and in accordance with the conditions of people who are currently in the Covid-19 pandemic, where their mobility is mostly at home, due to social restrictions. .

In addition to the choice of media use, candidates must also prepare the contents of their political promises to be conveyed to voters. Candidates must be able to make attractive political promises to voters, because political promises are an instrument used to influence and convince voters. Political promises of candidates are important for voters, as a basis for determining choices [10]. Then the political promise, namely the vision, mission and program, is also one of the candidate registration requirements documents. The urgency of the existence of political messages is also due to changes in the direct election mechanism. The position of voters as active actors or subjects who assess and vote, while candidates as objects or targets that are assessed and chosen by voters [4].

As soon as the importance of the existence of a political message is not necessarily the main concern of candidates. The findings of the Association for Elections and Democracy (Perludem) in the 2015 regional head elections there were many similarities in the visions of the candidates, even though they differed in regions, cultures and community problems [11]. In the regional head elections in Rokan Hulu Regency in 2020, in detail the contents of the political messages of the candidates are quite diverse. Even so, in the vision there is a similarity in substance to the goal, namely to make the society prosperous. This seems to suggest that the problems that occur in the people of Rokan Hulu Regency are still on the basic problem, namely the fulfillment of basic needs, so that the community becomes prosperous.

A political message must pay attention to the problems or needs of voters. A political message must come from political issues that are developing in society. Political messages must be able to open up and reveal the problems that are being faced by society. Political messages must also contain ways of solving problems and responding to people's needs [12] and messages made should pay attention to the characteristics of the audience, namely sociodemographics, psychology and behavior [13]. Even though the candidates have a political promise (vision) that has the same substance, namely to make the people prosperous, of course the majority of the people will decide the choice of one of these candidates. According to the results of the vote count by the General Election Commission (KPU) of Rokan Hulu Regency on December 16, 2020, candidate number 2, Sukiman-Indra Gunawan received the most votes, namely 92,394 votes or 39.25%. Followed by candidate number 3, Hafith Syukri-Erizal, with 90,246 votes or 38.33%. Then candidate number 3, Hamulian-Syahril Topan, which is 49,155 votes or 20.88.

Based on the vote count, it was seen that there was a slight difference in the votes between candidate number 2 and candidate number 3. This seemed to show that the political promises of the two candidates were of concern and appeal to the majority of voters, especially rational voters. Voters are residents aged 17 years or already / already married who are registered in the Election. [14], said that there are three types of voters, namely rational or problem-solving oriented, traditional voters oriented towards ideology, and skeptical or apathetic voters.

Political messages or political promises will also affect the level of public participation, as happened in the regional head elections in North Sulawesi Province in 2015. The level of voter participation is quite low, because political promises of candidates are less attractive, normative and even duplicative [15]. On the other hand, a candidate's political message which contains the fulfillment of the interests of the voters is the basis for the election of the candidate and the increase in the participation rate. This condition occurred in the parliamentary elections in Norway in 2009. Candidates who conveyed political promises about solving the problems of immigrant groups received support from these groups [16]

This study describes the political communication of candidates in gaining voter support during the Covid-19 pandemic in the 2020 Rokan Hulu regional head election. This research describes the mapping of the suitability of a candidate's political message with voter needs. In this regard, the analytical theory used is Raymond Bauer's (1964) stubborn audience theory. Stubborn audience theory assumes that audiences are very powerful (active) in the process of political communication. The audience will filter, select and accept or reject it based on conceptual filters or other factors [17]

In detail, the focus of political communication for regional head candidates in Rokan Hulu Regency includes three points, namely (1) How did the political messages conveyed by candidates to voters during the Covid-19 pandemic? (2) What needs do voters want candidates to fulfill? (3) How to map the suitability of a candidate's political message with the needs of voters?

II. METHODOLOGY

The approach used in this research uses qualitative and quantitative approaches. A qualitative approach is used to explain a candidate's political message to voters, the types of voter needs and to map the suitability of political messages to voter needs. Data collection through interviews with 5 informants with different backgrounds, namely farmers, traders, millennials, women and community leaders. A quantitative approach to determine the level of voter need, using a survey with a sample of 396 voters from the population, namely the permanent voter list (DPT), 314,646 voters. Sampling was based on proportional sampling spread over 145 villages / sub-districts in Rokan Hulu Regency, Riau Province, Indonesia.

III. FINDINGS DAN DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that (1) the political message of the candidate to the voters (2) The type and level of voter needs (3) The mapping of the suitability of the candidate's political message with the needs of the voters.

1. Candidate Political Message to Voters

The political messages of candidates in the regional head elections in Rokan Hulu Regency are political promises of candidates in the form of visions, missions and programs that are conveyed to voters in the atmosphere of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the candidate requirements document submitted to the General Election Commission of Rokan Hulu Regency, it is known the candidate's vision and program. First, the Hamulian-Syahril Topan candidate has a vision, namely "Creating an advanced, fair, prosperous Rokan Hulu society with reliable infrastructure and regional economy by 2025". In realizing this vision, 5 missions and 24 programs were compiled. Based on the form of the program that is presented, researchers classify it in the form of sectors or fields of development including infrastructure, economy, governance, education, health, agriculture, law, religion and sports. More clearly can be seen in the following image:



Figure 1. Classification of the Hamulian-Syahril Typhoon Program in the Field of Development

The infrastructure program includes strengthening accessibility for the mobility of goods and people as well as accessibility and connectivity between regions, agricultural production centers, industry and tourism. Then the arrangement of urban and rural settlements, as well as the supply of energy for housing and industry evenly. In the economic sector, it includes the construction of a Job Training Center in an effort to increase the competence and competitiveness of local workers. Development of integrated tourism areas with community-based creative industries to support the regional economy. Increasing the role of companies including BUMD in regional development, as well as cooperation with border areas as an effort to form a new economic center.

In the field of government, it includes the formation of ethics, behavior and professionalism of the apparatus as well as the modernization of government information systems. In agriculture, namely improving irrigation systems and developing integrated agribusiness areas. In the education sector, it is in the form of improving infrastructure and public access at all levels of education. In the health sector, namely improving health infrastructure and public access to health facilities, as well as increasing awareness and application of environmentally sound development. In the field of religion, it includes the development of religious infrastructure, practice of cultural values, tolerance and social harmony. In the field of law by providing legal assistance to the community in each District. Then, the sports sector is in the form of sports infrastructure development.

The two candidates Sukiman-Indra Gunawan have a vision, namely "The realization of a more advanced and competitive Rokan Hulu Regency in the diversity of customs and cultures based on religious values towards a prosperous society". In realizing this vision, 5 missions and 14 programs were compiled. Based on the form of the program that is presented, researchers classify it in the form of sectors or fields of development including infrastructure, economy, governance and public services, education, health, sports as well as culture and tourism. More clearly can be seen in the following image:



Figure 2. Classification of Sukiman-Indra Gunawan Program in Development Sector

Infrastructure sector, namely improvement and equity, including public facilities. Then, the arrangement of the settlement area and housing as well as the provision of clean water and electricity. In the economic field, it includes the development of a people's economy in the context of increasing people's income and purchasing power as well as providing employment opportunities and reducing poverty. In the field of governance and public services, it includes programs to improve the quality of public services, increase local revenue, and increase reliable, accountable and transparent governance. In the field of education, this includes improving the quality of smart and healthy human resources as well as improving the quality of education. In the health sector in the form of improving the quality of health services. In the field of sports, namely fostering and developing youth and sports, as well as environmentally friendly development. In the field of culture and tourism in the form of developing tourism potential, customs and local culture. Then the fostering and development of customs, culture and religious harmony. The three candidates Hafith Syukri-Erizal have a vision, namely "Rokan Hulu Makmur, Religion and Excellence 2026". In realizing this vision, 5 missions and 34 programs were compiled. Based on the form of the program that is presented, researchers are classified into sectors or fields of development including economy, governance and public services, education, agriculture, fishery and livestock, tourism, environment; religion and sports. More clearly can be seen in the following image:



Figure 3. Classification of Hafith Syukri-Erizal Programs in the Field of Development

In the economic field, this includes making PERUSDA the center of accelerating and increasing the productivity of the community's economy. Guidance for BUMDES as a center for economic empowerment of rural communities. (Counseling, training, marketing and IT utilization). Increase the productivity of SMEs and local creative industries in order to increase per capita income. Improve the management of traditional markets as the center of people's economic development. Increase the number and competence of young entrepreneurs.

Increased public private partnership collaboration with all non-government development partners. In the field of governance and public services, it includes programs to increase the capacity and discipline of the apparatus as well as good financial governance. Improvement of employee welfare based on performance and capacity. SPM-based service quality improvement (minimum service standards). Pay attention to the existence of honorary staff and freelance workers. Increased transparency and accountability of public policies. Increasing the capacity and quality of employees through training and coaching programs. Improved governance that is responsive, transparent, accountable, and free from corruption.

In the field of education, the program includes scholarships for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (including educators, extension agents). 100 Doctoral Program, a certification program for vocational school graduates. Equitable education (PAUD, SD, SLTP) between villages and cities, both in facilities and in teaching and educational staff. In the field of Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Husbandry, it includes programs to increase agricultural productivity based on smart farming. Improve aquaculture and livestock. Increase the number and capacity of actors and extension workers in the agriculture, fishery, livestock and tourism sectors. In the field of tourism, it includes a program to develop halal tourist destinations (Muslim friendly). Develop an earth park destination (geopark). Increase accessibility and promotion of tourism based on digital tourism. Developing local wisdom-based tourism events.

In the environmental sector, it includes waste management and green open space arrangement. Family fostering towards a harmonious society. Infiltration well procurement program in flood prone areas. In the field of sports in the form of increased coaching and facilitation of sports and arts activities. Then in the field of religion, it includes increasing the role and function of places of worship and religious leaders in order to create a religious and harmonious society. Making the mosque a center for moral development and social and economic empowerment of the people. One mosque one hafiz program. Establish Baitul Maal Wa Tamwil (BMT) Rokan Hulu. Coaching youth activities in preventing drug abuse and juvenile delinquency. The Hafiz QUR'AN program for elementary, middle and high school students and the equivalent.

2. Types and Levels of Voter Needs to Be Fulfilled by Candidates

Types of voter needs are basic needs, namely road and bridge infrastructure; jobs; Startup Capital; market development; agricultural assistance in the form of fertilizers, irrigation and livestock; as well as sports facilities. In more detail can be seen in the following figure:

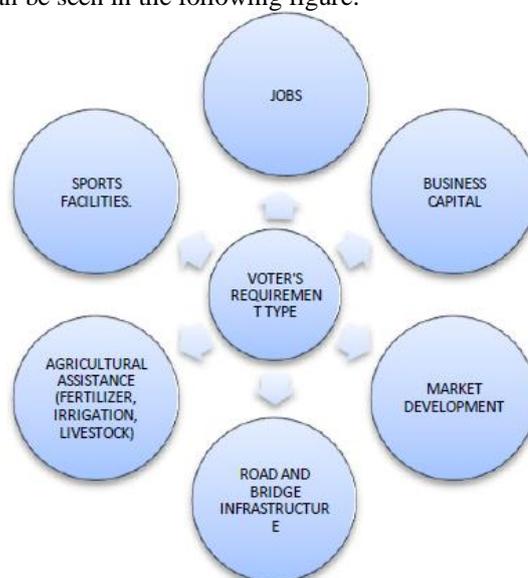


Figure 4. Types of Voter Needs in Rokan Hulu Regency

Figure 4. Types of Voters' Needs in Rokan Hulu Regency of the seven types of voter needs, the highest level of need is employment by 24%, followed by business assistance by 23%, road / bridge construction by 17%, fertilizer by 11%, schools by 8% , livestock by 6%, sports facilities by 5%, market development by 4% and irrigation by 2%. More clearly can be seen in the following image:

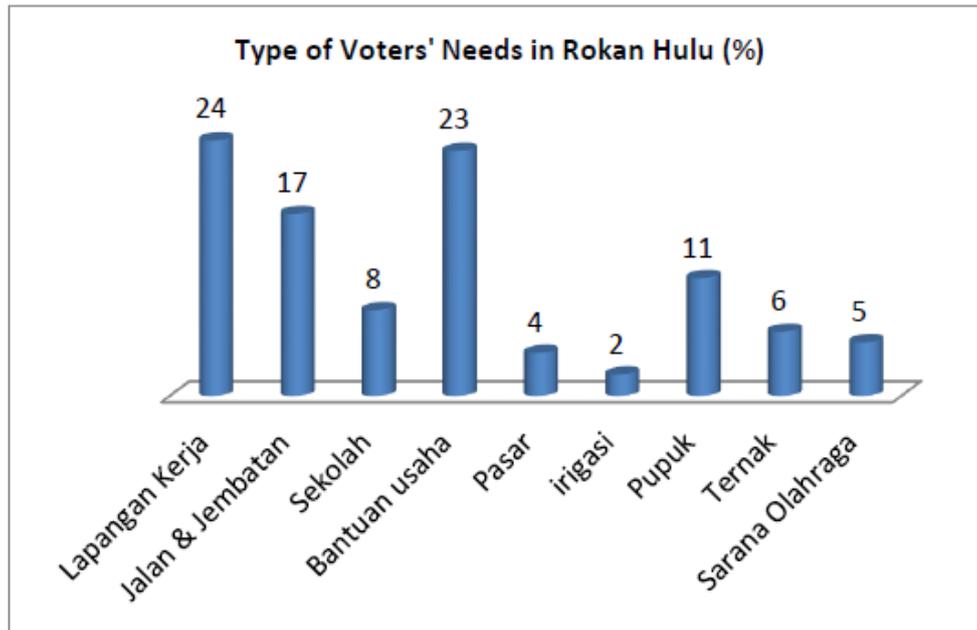


Figure 5. Levels of Voter Needs in Rokan Hulu Regency

3. Mapping of Candidates' Political Messages with Voter Needs

Based on the types of voter needs, it can be seen the suitability of the political promises submitted by the candidates in the regional head elections in Rokan Hulu Regency in 2020. Voters' needs in the form of road and bridge infrastructure are in accordance with the programs of candidates Hamulian-Syahril Topan and candidate Sukiman-Indra Gunawan. Job field needs are in accordance with the candidate program Hamulian-Syahril Topan, candidate Sukiman-Indra Gunawan and candidate Hafith Syukri-Erizal. The need for business capital and market development is in accordance with the Hafith Syukri-Erizal candidate program. The need for school facilities is in accordance with the Hamulian- Syahril Typhoon candidate program, Hafith Syukri-Erizal. Irrigation needs are in accordance with the Hamulian-Syahril Topan candidate program. The need for livestock is in accordance with the Hafith Syukri-Erizal candidate program. None of the needs for fertilizer assistance was included in the candidates' program. Voters' needs for sports facilities are in accordance with the program of candidates Hamulian-Syahril Topan and candidate Hafith Syukri-Erizal. In detail can be seen in the following image:

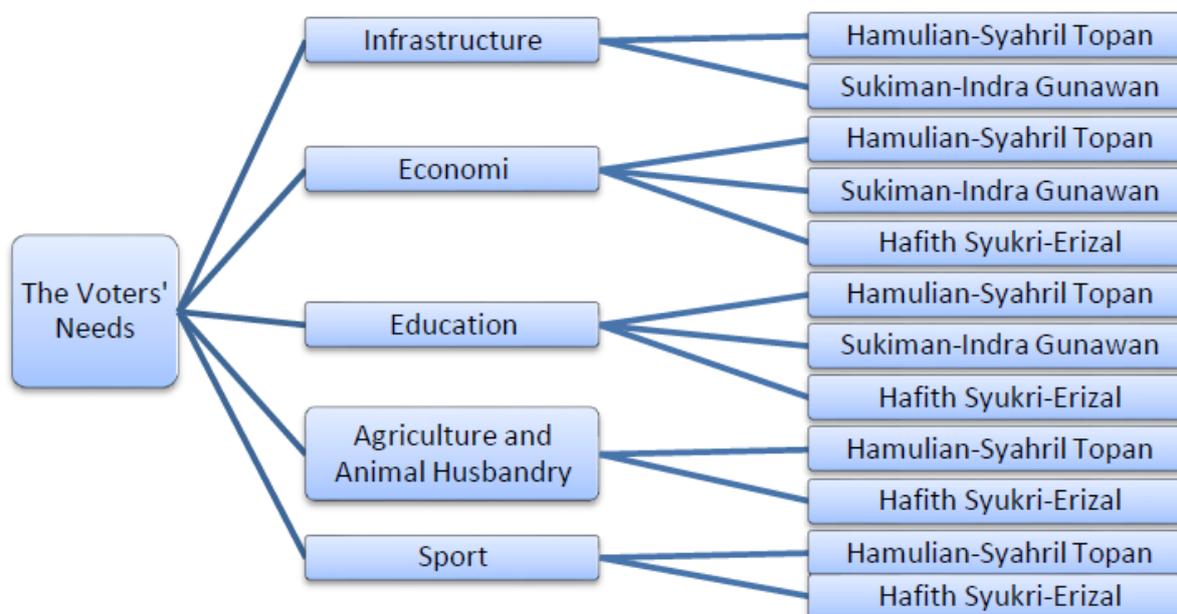


Figure 6. Matching Voters' Needs with Candidate Programs

According to the description of the mapping of the suitability of voter needs with the candidate program, it is known that the Hamulian-Syahril Topan candidate program contains the most voter needs. Then, followed by candidates Hafith Syukri-Erizal and candidates Sukiman-Indra Gunawan. However, the candidate Sukiman-Indra Gunawan, followed by Hafith Syukri-Erizal and Hamulian-Syahril Topan, obtained the highest votes. Political messages are not the main consideration for voters in Rokan Hulu Regency in determining their choice.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. The political messages of candidates to voters in the regional head elections in Rokan Hulu Regency in 2020 are partly in accordance with the needs of voters.
2. Voters' needs are less than the number of programs submitted by candidates and are in the form of basic needs, namely road and bridge infrastructure, employment opportunities, business capital, market development, school facilities, agricultural assistance in the form of irrigation, fertilizers and livestock, and sports facilities
3. A candidate's political message that is in accordance with the needs of the voters does not necessarily receive majority support from voters. Political messages are not the main consideration for voters in Rokan Hulu Regency in determining their choice.

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