

Research Article

# Political Communication Strategy in Winning the Regional Election: A Case Study of the Victory of the ERAMAS Pair in the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Election

Halim Perdana Hasibuan\*, Muhammad Husni Ritonga & Anang Anas Azhar

Department of Islamic Broadcasting Communication, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia, 20371

\*Corresponding Author: [halimperdanaalim@yahoo.com](mailto:halimperdanaalim@yahoo.com) | Phone Number: +6287787556437

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine: 1) The communication strategy of the ERAMAS success team in gaining support in the 2018 simultaneous regional elections in North Sumatra, 2) The campaign communication strategy of the ERAMAS pair in attracting public attention, 3) The obstacles faced by the ERAMAS success team in the 2018 simultaneous regional elections in North Sumatra. This study uses qualitative research with a naturalistic approach, this approach intends to create a systematic and objective description of an event, by collecting, evaluating, verifying, and synthesizing evidence to support facts in order to obtain a conclusion. Data collection in this study was carried out using various observation techniques, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that: 1) The communication strategy of the ERAMAS success team in gaining support in the 2018 simultaneous regional elections in North Sumatra is by: a) direct selling, b) involving all elements of society, and c) maximizing the role of social media. 2) The ERAMAS pair's Campaign Communication Strategy in attracting public attention is by: a) being dialogical and open, b) campaigning culturally and structurally, and c) holding religious and social activities. 3) The obstacles faced by the ERAMAS success team in the 2018 simultaneous regional elections in North Sumatra are: a) remote geographical location, b) the many slanders and bad framing, and c) intervention from the central government. Meanwhile, the solutions taken to overcome these obstacles are: a) forming a solid team, b) continuing to campaign politely and obeying the rules, and c) convincing the public by providing the best vision and mission.

**Keywords:** Communication strategy; Regional Election; Success team; ERAMAS; Case Study

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Regional head elections (Pilkada) are one of the characteristics of a democratic country that allows people to directly elect their leaders. Since the reform era, direct Pilkada has become an indicator of improving the quality of democracy in Indonesia, in line with the concept of regional autonomy and decentralization. Pilkada is not only an arena for political competition, but also a means of political communication between candidates, political parties, and the community in determining the direction of public policy. Throughout history, the position of regional heads has always been strategic, both as an extension of the central government and as regional leaders. Changes in regulations from Law Number 1 of 1945 to Law Number 12 of 2008 reflect the political dynamics that influence the pattern of power and leadership of regional heads (Kurnia, 2016). Direct regional elections are important to implement as a critique of representative democracy that often ignores the interests of the people and as an effort to increase public participation in determining their leaders. In accordance with the mandate of the 1945 Constitution, Law No. 32 of 2004, and Government Regulation No. 6 of 2005, this system is a solution to the recruitment of regional heads by the DPRD which is prone to money politics and functions as a means of political learning in regional autonomy. Its implementation is regulated by the KPUD, including the campaign stages scheduled based on the proposals of the candidate pairs. With the development of technology and communication, political parties need to adopt more innovative campaign strategies, including marketing approaches that previously developed in the business world (Sugiarto, 2014).

Political marketing aims to win the hearts of constituents to choose a particular candidate through effective communication strategies, one of which is campaigning. Political campaigns function to shape the candidate's image and build internal relationships with supporters and external relationships with the public and the media. In this context, the 2018 North Sumatra gubernatorial election held on June 27, 2018 became a political competition with the main candidates being Lieutenant General Edy Rahmayadi and former Governor of DKI Jakarta, Djarot Saiful Hidayat (Firmanzah, 2010).

Recently, North Sumatra held the 2018 simultaneous regional elections.

The following researcher will describe the journey of the North Sumatra gubernatorial candidates who advanced in the 2018 North Sumatra gubernatorial election (hereinafter referred to as the 2018 North Sumatra gubernatorial election or 2018 North Sumatra gubernatorial election) which was held on June 27, 2018 to determine the governor and deputy governor for the 2018-2023 period. The election schedule for this period follows the schedule for the third wave of simultaneous regional elections in June 2018. The official candidates in this regional election are the former Kostrad Commander, Lieutenant General Edy Rahmayadi, and also the former Jakarta Governor Djarot Saiful Hidayat, from the results of the analysis of political communication in the 2017 Jakarta Pilkada, which shows that personal branding factors and emotional closeness to voters greatly determine the level of candidate electability (Ghiffary, 2019).

Based on the regulations, only political parties that have 20 or more seats in the North Sumatra Regional People's Representative Council can nominate candidates. Political parties that have fewer seats can nominate candidates only if they have received support from other political parties. Meanwhile, independent candidates need a minimum of 764,578 votes or 6.5% of the number of voters in North Sumatra. Support must be shown in the form of a photocopy of an ID card which will be verified by the KPU. However, no candidate will run independently in the regional elections. Edy Rahmayadi first registered with the Hanura Party in August 2017.8 the Gerindra Party, PKS and PAN then declared their support at the end of December 2017. In order to participate in this election, Edy Rahmayadi resigned from his position as Commander of Kostrad in 2018. Although he had previously declared his support for Tengku Erry Nuradi, Golkar and Nasdem then decided to support the Edy-Musa pair. The Democrat Party declared its support for the Edy-Musa pair on May 11, 2018. The Democrat Party's stance was directly conveyed by the Democrat Party's General Chair, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

ERAMAS' vision, namely "North Sumatra Advanced, Safe, Prosperous, and Dignified," is the basis for building a campaign strategy. Their mission covers various aspects of life, from improving social welfare, ethical politics, quality education, free association from crime, to environmental sustainability. The political communication strategy implemented by the ERAMAS campaign team focuses on an emotional approach, direct involvement with the community, and mobilization of cadres from various social levels (Narendra, 2013). The main components in a political communication strategy include three important aspects, namely communicators (figures who convey political messages), audiences (voters who respond to the campaign), and communication channels (media used to convey campaign messages). With a mature strategy, the ERAMAS pair managed to gain strong legitimacy from the community and won the 2018 North Sumatra Pilkada. A democratic and transparent election allows direct public participation in determining its leader. Therefore, the success of a candidate pair does not only depend on popularity alone, but also on how political communication strategies can build public trust and move them to actively participate in the election process

The phenomenon of ERAMAS' victory is interesting to study further, especially related to the political communication strategy applied in winning the competition. With a complex political field and high voter heterogeneity, ERAMAS' victory shows the effectiveness of the communication strategy used in rallying support in various levels of society. Therefore, this study focuses on the analysis of the political communication strategy applied by the ERAMAS pair in the 2018 North Sumatra Pilkada. The results of research on the political communication strategies of candidate pairs in the Central Java Pilkada found that the use of social media and direct approaches to the public were the main factors in building the candidate's image (Nastain, 2022). Although there have been many studies discussing political communication strategies in the Pilkada, studies on the specific strategies implemented by the ERAMAS pair in the 2018 North Sumatra Pilkada are still limited. This study will fill this gap by analyzing the political communication factors that contributed to ERAMAS' victory, both in terms of media use, campaign messages, and approaches to voters. Thus, this study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the study of political communication as well as practical insights for candidates or campaign teams in future political contests.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The approach used is through a qualitative approach. This means that the data collected is not in the form of numbers, but rather the data comes from interview scripts, field notes, personal documents, memos, and other official documents, so that the purpose of this qualitative research is to describe the empirical reality behind the phenomenon in depth, detail and even completely. In this study, the reason the researcher used a qualitative approach was because he wanted to describe what strategies were implemented by the successful team of the ERAMAS Candidate Pair for Governor in the 2018 North Sumatra Simultaneous Regional Elections so that the ERAMAS pair won as the elected Governor/Deputy Governor of North Sumatra for the 2018-2023 period. The characteristics of qualitative research include (1) natural settings as a source of data, (2) researchers become the key instrument, (3) qualitative research places more importance on the process than on the

results, (4) researchers tend to analyze data inductively, and (5) an essential aspect of qualitative research is the meaning that actors have that underlies their actions (Bogdan, 1997). Data is information about something. The definition of a data source in research is the subject from which data can be obtained. The information used in this study is primary and secondary data. According to Lofland in Moleong, the main data sources in qualitative research are words and actions (Wada, 2024). In order to obtain the data needed in this study. The researcher used several methods, namely:

### **Observation**

*Observation is a person's ability to use*

His observations through the work of the five senses of the eye and assisted by the other five senses (Sinaga, 2023). The author used this method to observe, listen and record directly the conditions of North Sumatra Province, geographical location, demographics, activities of the ERAMAS success team in seeking support from the community, ERAMAS political communication strategies, the role of the mass media, political jargon that is of concern to the community, and so on.

### **Interview**

*Interview is a conversation with a specific purpose*

The conversation is conducted by two parties, namely the interviewer who asks questions and the interviewee who provides answers to the questions (Purwono, 2019). This method is used to obtain information about the communication strategy of the successful team in seeking support, the campaign activities of the ERAMAS gubernatorial candidate pair, the mass media that plays a role, and the permanent voters.

The stages that researchers carry out in the interview process are:

- 1) Determining the informant to be interviewed
- 2) Preparing the interview by planning questions to obtain data from the informant in question, the lines of questions are an elaboration of the focus of the research.
- 3) The researcher approaches the informant by introducing himself, stating the purpose of his visit by submitting a research permit, then the researcher makes an appointment to conduct an interview with the informant.
- 4) Conducting the interview and during the interview the researcher is required to maintain distance by regulating good language and ethics.
- 5) Copying the interview results obtained, then arranging them in a certain order according to the outline of the analysis.

### **Documentation**

Documentation can be interpreted as collecting data through documents or important notes, newspapers, the internet, and others. Documentation is searching for data about things or variables in the form of notes, transcripts, books, newspapers, magazines, inscriptions, meeting minutes, leggers, agendas. The author uses this method to obtain data about the history of the province of North Sumatra, geographical location, demographics, photos of campaign activities of the successful team, mass media covering the activities of the ERAMAS gubernatorial candidate pair, and so on. Arikunto stated that the data analysis process both during data collection and after data collection is completed is carried out in the following steps:

- 1) At the time of data collection, data reduction, data presentation and data reflection are carried out.
- 2) Arranging important findings and trying to understand the results of these findings and conducting data reduction.
- 3) Arranging data presentation systematically so that the meaning of the event is increasingly clear.
- 4) Organizing data comprehensively and then drawing conclusions (Arikunto, 2010).

If it is felt that the conclusion still needs additional data, then a field review will be carried out again for data collection activities as an in-depth study. Through these data analysis steps, researchers can explain in detail the data that has been obtained in the field to find out a clear picture of the problem being studied, namely the description of the communication strategy of the Erasmas pair's successful team in gaining support in the 2018 simultaneous regional elections in North Sumatra. Qualitative research faces important issues regarding testing the validity of research results. In order for the data obtained to lead to conclusions that can be scientifically accounted for, a data validity check is carried out. The techniques used in checking the validity of data in this study, as stated by Sugiono, include: 1. Extension of participation, the researcher stays or always goes to the research field until data collection saturation is achieved. 2. Observation persistence, namely the data validity check technique based on "How high the degree of researcher persistence is in conducting observation activities. Observation persistence is intended to find characteristics and elements in situations that are very relevant to the problem or issue being sought and then focus on these things in detail. In other words, if the extension of participation provides scope, then observation persistence provides depth. As a provision for researchers to increase persistence is by reading various book references or research results or documentation related to the findings being studied. 3. Triangulation,

which is a data validity checking technique that utilizes something other than the data for checking purposes or as a comparison to the data. Triangulation in this credibility testing is interpreted as data from various sources in various ways, and at various times (Arikunto, 2010).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Political Communication Strategy in Winning the Regional Election: Case Study of the Victory of the ERAMAS Pair in the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Election

The success of a candidate pair in winning an election is highly dependent on the communication strategy used by the campaign team. In the context of the 2018 North Sumatra Pilkada, the campaign team of the pair Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajekshah (ERAMAS) implemented a main strategy that focused on two key aspects: popularity and electability. In addition, they also utilized interfaith communication, the role of mass media and social media, and a direct approach to the community to strengthen support.

##### 1. Popularity as Initial Capital

Popularity in the context of an election refers to the extent to which a candidate is known to the community. According to an interview with Edy Rahmayadi, the ERAMAS main strategy team is to ensure that the candidate is known to the majority of voters in North Sumatra. With a total of the Permanent Voters List (DPT) of around 9 million people, their main target is to ensure that as many voters as possible know who Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajekshah are. Increasing popularity is done through:

Direct political work, such as meeting the community and carrying out social activities, mass media exposure, including television, to introduce potential voters more widely, community approach, by utilizing social networks and community leaders to build closeness with voters.

##### 2. Electability as a Determinant of Victory

Once known, the next challenge is to increase electability, namely how likely a candidate is to be elected by the community. High popularity does not necessarily guarantee victory without a strategy to convert popularity into real votes in the ballot box. The main factors that influence electability include:

The candidate's track record and achievements, which voters consider in determining their choice, effective campaigns, both face-to-face and social media to build a positive image.

##### 3. Interfaith Communication Strategy

One of the main strategies used by the ERAMAS campaign team is a religion-based approach. Based on an interview with the elected Deputy Governor, Musa Rajekshah, this communication strategy is realized through attendance at various religious events, whether Islamic, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, or Confucian. Attendance at grand dhikr activities, religious lectures, mass, or meetings of religious figures aims to demonstrate an inclusive attitude and build good relations with various elements of society. Thus, ERAMAS is able to reach voters from various religious backgrounds.

##### 4. Communication with All Elements of Society

The ERAMAS campaign team adopts a universal communication strategy involving community leaders, traditional leaders, mass organizations, and other community elements. This approach is carried out to create close connectivity between the candidate pair and the people of North Sumatra. This communication also aims to understand the aspirations of the community and develop work programs that are in accordance with their needs.

##### 5. The Role of Mass Media and Social Media

The ERAMAS campaign team's communication strategy also relies on mass media and social media as the main tools in building the image and popularity of the candidate pair, mass media various print media, television, and online media widely reported on the activities of the candidate pairs in accordance with applicable regulations. Thus, ERAMAS gained wide exposure that supported the increase in their electability, social media was used effectively as a means of disseminating information regarding the vision and mission, work programs, and activities of the candidate pairs. The use of social media allows for the dissemination of campaign messages quickly and cost-effectively, while also being a forum for direct interaction with the community.

##### 6. Formation of a Solid Campaign Team

ERAMAS' success in the 2018 North Sumatra Pilkada was also inseparable from the role of a well-organized campaign

team. The campaign team consisted of winning volunteers and political party cadres who had high loyalty. Each region had a coordinator who was responsible for organizing campaign strategies in their respective regions. Good coordination between campaign teams ensured that the campaign ran effectively and in accordance with the target voters.

#### 7. Grassroots Campaign Strategy

A direct approach to the community is an important strategy in the ERAMAS campaign. Candidate pairs routinely visit various regions to engage in dialogue with residents and understand the problems they face. This strategy builds emotional closeness between prospective leaders and the community and increases trust in the ERAMAS pair. This grassroots approach has proven effective in gaining support from the wider community.

#### 8. Structured Campaign Management

One of the factors that supports the success of ERAMAS is thorough campaign planning. Each candidate pair's activities are scheduled systematically to ensure effective communication with the community. A structured campaign helps maximize the use of resources and reach as many voters as possible in a limited time.

In this case, the campaign team is more about the cultural side. So, how to convince the public so that they are sure to choose ERAMAS. So, all the existing components, namely in the form of campaign props and brochures, are then delivered to the public to convince them. Direct selling is one of the methods that can be used as a communication strategy in campaigning. This method is simply to go directly to the field by campaigning massively and diligently influencing the public to choose a particular candidate pair. This method is usually used by PKS cadres and is used as a campaign model in every election event to win the pair they support. As the results of research conducted by Perdana, the use of media such as mass media, social media, billboards and direct selling (introducing the party profile and sharing.

### 3.2 ERAMAS Couple's Campaign Communication Strategy in Attracting Public Attention

Apart from the campaign team, campaign strategy is also something that cannot be separated from the victory of a candidate pair in an election contest. Good communication will produce a good response. Likewise, bad communication will not have any impact and will only add to the murky atmosphere. The following will describe the ERAMAS pair's campaign communication strategy in attracting public attention. The description of the results of this study is based on data from the researcher's findings which come from interviews, observations, and documentation. A campaign is a strategy for building an image, because a campaign is an organized effort to influence decision-making processes in specific groups. In a democracy, political campaigns are carried out during the run-up to the general election, the purpose of which is solely to gain support and win votes and gain sympathy from the public (Azhar, 2017).

Mapping the potential voter areas is important. By mapping the campaign team will know the percentage of voters and make an intense approach in places with few potential voters. Not only knowing the percentage of voters, but mapping the electoral district also functions as input and hopes from the community. These hopes should be responded to by the candidate pairs so that they will be strengthened and increasingly ensure the consistency of potential voters to choose a particular candidate pair. Specifically, Mr. Edy Rahmayadi admitted that the areas with the largest ERAMAS voter bases are in Mandailing Natal Regency at 95% and Langkat Regency at 87%. So these areas are the focus of the campaign and the campaign team's more intense approach. In line with the above, the campaign strategies used are also different. For white areas because the majority have voted.

As for the gray areas, it means that in the area there is a struggle for votes for each regional head candidate, specifically for the ERAMAS campaign team, they carried out several activities in the gray areas. Based on the interview above, the campaign carried out in the gray areas was by carrying out religious activities. It is undeniable that religious activities are very often used to gather masses in very large numbers. Religious activities have two effects at once. The first effect is the spiritual effect which creates a good image for a particular candidate pair in the eyes of their supporters. At the same time, religious activities in the campaign will also bring benefits to the candidate pair organizers, namely hoping that those present will vote for them. The ustadz or ulama who are presented as spokespeople are also considered very effective in campaigning for a particular candidate pair. The ustadz are considered the mouthpiece of the candidate pair's campaign team and are therefore given a mandate through religious activities. According to Mahadi, the involvement of kiai/ustaz/ulama in the world of politics is very clear, and the political role they play is not in doubt, this is proven by their persistence in fighting for policies related to religious interests (Mahadi, 2015).

In addition to holding religious activities, the ERAMAS campaign team also conducts social activities in areas that are still gray to gain public sympathy. The social activity program carried out by a party or a particular candidate pair is a short-term political image that is typical of a campaign, that voters selectively perceive parties, candidates, issues and events in the campaign, giving them meaning, based on which they determine their choice.<sup>21</sup> No matter how fast the

development of social media and print media is today, at the grassroots level or among the lower middle class, they still need real action from a particular candidate pair. They do not need popularity in the mass media, for them it is very simple to what extent a particular candidate pair brings benefits to their family and village (Lilo, 2011).

The communication strategy of the ERAMAS campaign team in attracting public sympathy is to use two approaches. The first is to use a dialogic model. Dialogic simply means open or communicative. The key to real communication is dialogue. Dialogue is a relationship between me and you, between humans and humans that is characterized by togetherness, openness of heart, honesty and spontaneity. In the context of political communication, dialogue is a form of campaign that is time to be carried out, to provide an understanding of a problem to the public and the ways offered to overcome the problem. In accordance with the development of intelligence and the increasing criticality of society, they want an investigative and argumentative view. This is relevant to the basic definition of a campaign that requires persuasive rather than repressive efforts. In addition, the dialogic form that produces two-way communication is very appropriate for capturing public aspirations, and can quickly articulate those aspirations so that they are easier to understand by public policy makers. The dialogue here is not between figures or candidates and their own party cadres, but rather involves figures and cadres between parties, in front of a public that does not only consist of party cadres who are in dialogue (Corry, 2014).

Dialogue can not only be done conventionally, but can also be done by utilizing the most advanced technology, namely by using online mass media. Mass media greatly helps political parties or party candidates to disseminate their ideas or views widely in a society consisting of various segments. Types of audio-visual media, such as television, video conference, zoom meeting are the best choices, because in addition to being able to be heard, the visualization of people speaking will greatly help prospective voters understand the position of a party or candidate on developing issues. Currently, television not only broadcasts party programs, but viewers can also provide feedback by telephone. Thus, two-way communication can still be created and there is a back and forth from the communicant to convey suggestions and input to the candidate pair. The second campaign strategy approach taken by the ERAMAS success team is an open campaign approach in the field. Open campaigns can be heard by the wider community. At the same time, candidate pairs will be able to understand the culture of a particular region. Thus, for both candidate pairs and prospective voters, there will be strong communication and emotional ties.

The next strategy of the ERAMAS campaign team in attracting public sympathy is to use campaign jargon or campaign slogans. ERAMAS itself is an abbreviation of Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajekshah. To make it easier to remember and provide beautiful language, it is abbreviated as ERAMAS. The choice of this word as a campaign jargon is more or less intended to lead to the return of North Sumatra to its golden age, as the glory of North Sumatra as before can be restored. On the other hand, ERAMAS also has a mainstay campaign jargon known as "North Sumatra with Dignity". This jargon is intended to eliminate the bad stigma regarding North Sumatra which has been considered as a province with a large number of corruption cases, so that North Sumatra must be dignified. Being dignified means having values from the province of North Sumatra that must be improved. Both values in its government system, as well as its natural and human resources. The use of jargon in a campaign is very important because jargon is understood as a particular cultural community which can be a hereditary tradition or a new tradition that is created naturally according to the interactions that occur within it. In the political realm, the use of jargon is closely related to the strategy system for gaining power (Azhar, 2017).

In the context of political communication and campaigning, socialization is an effort to introduce oneself to prospective voters, in this case the community, so that the community knows and wants to vote for a particular candidate pair. In the socialization process, the most important thing that the candidate pair does is to provide hope and change when they will occupy a certain position, so the presentation of the vision and mission must be conveyed firmly and clearly to the wider community. The task of campaigning at the structural level is handed over to the elites of the supporting parties of the ERAMAS pair, while at the grassroots level, responsibility is given to all elements of the party to participate in the campaign. Thus, the ERAMAS campaign team has actually spread to various elements of society, so that victory can be achieved. The majority of people at the lower levels are educated and have low economic conditions, therefore village people make choices/decisions based on calculations of cost and benefit or the benefits they will obtain. Indirectly, the campaign team that goes down to the grassroots will find it easier to communicate and absorb aspirations from the community. The community at the lower level has a lot of experience in participating in general elections regularly, therefore it can improve the ability of village communities in determining their choices. This affects their political actions and activities. They will always think about supporting a party by calculating the cost and benefit. At the same time, the community at the lower level in determining their choices is based on the choice that has the smallest risk or in other words they always want a sense of security first.

In addition, the campaign team also needs to pay attention to the party elite level so that they can participate in the campaign. The role of party elites cannot be doubted because they have a big impact on gaining votes. Party elites are figures

who have many supporters and are made into figures in certain communities, so their role is very much needed. According to Pradana, becoming an elite who enters political contestation requires a strategy. All of this is done in order to find out the mapping of elite votes. There are many ways that can be done, one of which is through a mapping survey. By determining sample indicators, elites will know how the opportunities are for elites to become members of the council in their chosen area (Sobandi, 2010). For elites who occupy certain electorate areas, political culture cannot be simply separated from the vote mapping strategy. Consideration of regional conditions is important because in order to obtain maximum votes, elites and their campaign teams compete to gain public support. Interactions between village communities and elites are carried out on the basis of administrative interests in taking care of personal needs. For village communities, elites are seen as non-cultural groups, because they will come when they need them and leave when their interests have been obtained. This is different from the behavior of village communities who help each other.

Of course, in every step of politics does not run smoothly without any disturbances and obstacles. However, there are still steps to resolve as an effort to overcome various obstacles that arise. The following will explain the obstacles or constraints faced and the solutions carried out by the ERAMAS success team in the 2018 simultaneous regional elections in North Sumatra. According to Mr. Edy Rahmayadi, in general the obstacles felt were about geographical problems that were too far away and the short campaign period, which caused access to campaigning to be hampered and required very expensive campaign costs. At the same time, this condition also resulted in a large political cost that had to be spent by the ERAMAS campaign team. On the other hand, the campaign period provided was very short and it was impossible to visit all areas in North Sumatra. Based on the documents that the researcher found, the campaign period for the 2018 North Sumatra regional elections was from February 18, 2018 to June 23, 2018.<sup>35</sup> The campaign period of only four months was certainly not sufficient to visit all areas in socializing the vision and mission of each candidate pair. This condition was realized by the ERAMAS pair that indeed with the short campaign period and the vast area of North Sumatra, it was an obstacle in itself, but this was not a problem. Because the same conditions also applied to ERAMAS' rivals. The efforts made were to maximize the areas where ERAMAS supporters had stale votes.

The obstacles faced by the ERAMAS campaign team as contained in the interview excerpt above are the many slanders or hoaxes circulating spreading bad news to corner the ERAMAS pair. Black campaign issues are widely circulated during the campaign period and even occur during the quiet period until the voting. The 2018 regional head elections in North Sumatra were one of the elections where many black campaign issues were found that threatened the political resilience of a region (Mantri, 2018). In addition, various slanders are also faced through more modern methods, for example, the spread of chain messages through applications that upload hoax images to social media. The spread of black campaigns through social media and messengers spreads faster than the spread through pamphlets, brochures, and leaflets. This spread is influenced by the rampant culture of sharing or sharing website links or chain message content on messengers. Because people today like to share website links with interesting titles, but not a few only read the title and then immediately share it without opening and reading it. Facts on the ground have found that it is not uncommon for campaigns to contain slander that brings down the opposing camp. This slander is called a black campaign. Different from negative campaigns that contain facts about the opponent's shortcomings/weaknesses. Black campaigns contain slander or accusations that are unclear and not accompanied by strong evidence aimed at assassinating the character of political opponents. In addition to the rampant slander faced by ERAMAS, there is also a serious problem, namely pressure from the central government. This happened because ERAMAS was not supported by the ruling party. One of the discourses that always emerged ahead of the regional elections was the involvement of the central government in intervening in the fair election process. In relation to this, there is still a lack of public trust in the central government. This was conveyed by Isna in his research, for example, that weak supervision caused the central government to be able to provide support to one of the candidate pairs. Therefore, in this case, there needs to be clear and firm regulations so as not to create opportunities for objectivity in the authorities during the election (Isna, 2010).

In relation to efforts to gain votes, all parties who work hard to design political marketing strategies long before the election, the campaign period is so short that it will not be able to run effectively and achieve maximum results if it is not preceded by activities that are able to attract voters in determining their election. strategy in disseminating information about candidates, parties, and programs offered by political actors through certain communication channels that are aimed at segments (targets) with the aim of changing the insights, attitudes, and behavior of prospective voters according to the wishes of the political actor. Indications of a solid team can also be seen from the way they conduct exploration in coalitions with parties, all matters relating to the internal party are optimally prepared to achieve victory in the regional elections. The successful team needs to carry out external activities, namely political communication, in the form of coalition exploration. This preparation is prepared so that communication with political stakeholders occurs effectively. Political stakeholders, identification of party strengths, and so on. All matters relating to increasing support are continuously carried out.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results as stated in the previous section, this research can be concluded as follows: 1. The communication strategy of the ERAMAS campaign team in gaining support in the 2018 simultaneous regional elections in North Sumatra is by: 1) direct selling, 2) involving all elements of society, and 3) maximizing the role of social media. 2. The campaign communication strategy of the ERAMAS pair in attracting public attention is by: 1) being dialogical and open, 2) campaigning culturally and structurally, and 3) holding religious and social activities. 3. The obstacles faced by the ERAMAS campaign team in the 2018 simultaneous regional elections in North Sumatra are: 1) the distant geographical location, 2) the many slanders and bad framing, and 3) intervention from the central government. Meanwhile, the solutions taken to overcome Kendal are: 1) forming a solid team, 2) continuing to campaign politely and obeying the rules, and 3) convincing the public by providing the best vision and mission.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to God Almighty for His guidance and grace so that I can complete the research entitled "Political Communication Strategy in Winning the Pilkada: Case Study of the Victory of the ERAMAS Pair in the 2018 North Sumatra Pilkada." I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my supervisors, Husni Ritonga and Anang Anas Azhar, for their support, constructive input, and invaluable encouragement throughout the research process. Their expertise and guidance played a major role in shaping the direction of this research. I would also like to express my gratitude for the support from the State Islamic University of North Sumatra Medan and the Faculty of Communication Da'wah for providing resources and an environment that supports academic research. Special thanks to the lecturers and colleagues who have shared their insights and provided valuable discussions that enriched this research. My sincere appreciation goes to the respondents and sources, including members of the ERAMAS campaign team, political analysts, media professionals, and community leaders who generously shared their time, experiences, and perspectives. Their contributions were crucial in giving depth and authenticity to this research. Furthermore, I am extremely grateful to my family and friends for their unwavering support, patience, and motivation. Their encouragement kept me focused and determined throughout this journey. Lastly, I would like to thank everyone who directly or indirectly contributed to this research. Without their support, this research would not have been possible.

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