Analysis of Gibran Teguh’s Online Blusukan Campaign Strategy at The 2020 Solo Elections

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the online blusukan campaign strategy used by the Gibran-Teguh in the 2020 Solo Regional Election. This is considered important to analyze because the situation in Indonesia, which is being hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, has changed the pattern of people’s lives on all fronts, including politics. The candidates for regional heads and mayors are looking for new ways to campaign so that they do not violate the health protocols set by the government. In the Solo Election, one of the candidates, namely Gibran – Teguh, used an online blusukan campaign strategy. The author used the theory of mass society and network society from Jan Van Dijk to find out how this online blusukan strategy was applied to the Solo Election. This paper is conceptual research that uses a descriptive qualitative approach and literature study research methods. This study concludes that the online blusukan campaign strategy is by the types and conditions of the citizen of Solo.

Keywords: Political Campaign; Blusukan; Online; Pemilihan Kepala Daerah.


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INTRODUCTION

In 2020, Regional Head Elections in Indonesia will be held simultaneously on December 9 (KPU, n.d.). At that time, the whole world, including Indonesia, was hit by the Coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia was at its peak. It was recorded that on November 30, 2020, positive cases of COVID-19 in Indonesia were recorded to reach 538,883, and the number of patients who died had reached 16,945 (Anwar, 2020). The government finally issued an extra budget of Rp. 5 trillion to finance equipment and preparations for supporting the implementation of the 2020 Regional Head Election to comply with the health protocol (CNN, 2020), to ensure that the 2020 simultaneous Regional Head Elections will continue in a state of the COVID-19 pandemic.

270 regions hold regional head elections simultaneously, divided into 9 provinces that will elect governors and deputy regents, 37 cities that must elect mayors and deputy mayors, and 224 regencies that will elect regents and deputy regents. The 2020 Regional Head Election itself consists of several series of activities that have the potential to bring in the masses or bring people together, such as the registration of candidate pairs on September 4-6 and of course during the campaign period from September 26 to December 5. The KPU implemented several new rules in organizing these activities during this pandemic, including strict health protocols for the participants and the Regional Head Election committee, such as when submitting registration documents, the documents must be wrapped in anti-liquid material, then all officers use a tool. Personal Protective Equipment PPE, then limiting the number of people in one room, not making physical contact such as shaking hands and so on, providing a place for washing hands and bringing their writing utensils (Farisa, 2020).

The public is asked to only monitor from their respective residences and is prohibited from holding a procession or in groups accompanying candidate pairs who want to register because it will create a crowd. The public can still watch the registration process for the candidates they support from their homes because each regional KPU will hold a live broadcast using social media and technology. (Farisa, 2020). Violation of these provisions will receive a warning and can be a potential act of violating the Regional Head Election.

In campaign activities, the KPU has also implemented new regulations, including the prohibition of holding campaigns in the form of public meetings, music concerts, leisure walks, social activities (bazaaars), then competitions (Oktavira, 2020), because they have the potential to cause crowds. Campaigns are only allowed if the activities are in the form of limited meetings, open debates, advertisements, and campaigns through print, social, electronic, or online media (Oktavira, 2020). The Regional Head Elections held in the city of Solo in 2020 involved two pairs of candidates for Mayor and Deputy Mayor, namely candidate pairs 01 Gibran Rakabuming and Teguh Prakosa who were promoted by PDI-P and supported by PAN, Golkar, Gerinda, PSI, PPP, NasDem, PKB, Hanura, Perindo, PBB, PKPI, Gelora, and the Democratic Party. Against the candidate pairs 02 Bagyo Wahyono and Suparjo who ran independently.

Mass Society or mass society, according to Van Dijk (2006) is a social formation whose main infrastructure for connecting between social levels is formed by groups, communities, and organizations. The basic components of Mass Society, among others, are that the community is still collective, consisting of communities that are close or close, and are in a village or city environment. Tend to be homogeneous and have the same social structure, such as a nuclear family consisting of a father, mother, and many children. In mass society, each unit (community, household) only has access to one or several of each type of mass media, such as one local newspaper, followed by one national newspaper and one or more radio and television channels. The amount of media they consume is relatively low. The main type of communication is face-to-face communication. The solidarity that exists in mass society also becomes stronger so that they have high inclusiveness. The mass society also generally occurs in an environment with a high population density. The basic component of this mass society is characterized by the physical presence of its members and their presence together or clustered in one place.

Meanwhile, a Network Society is a social formation with adequate media and social network infrastructure to connect all levels of
individuals, groups, and society (Van Dijk, 2006). The main difference with the Mass Society is the infrastructure, which then causes the characteristics of the community to be different. The basic units of a network society have become individuals who are connected by networks. Traditional collective cultures such as local communities that occur in mass society begin to unravel. Advances in network infrastructure and communication technology have made it possible for a person to live or work in a family, community, or organization, but he or she can easily move around and join large-scale social networks that are much more dispersed than communities in mass society. The main components that make up the community are no longer fixated on one location or at a time, utilizing advances in communication and information technology, these boundaries can be exceeded (Davis, 2000) so that the reach of the network community is no longer local but also global. In a network society, face-to-face communication is slowly being replaced by mediated communication, or communication through communication and information technology intermediaries (Crowley & Mitchell, 1994), such as through instant messaging and video chat applications.

Understanding new media means understanding the changes and transformations that occur in social processes, norms, ideas, and practices (Siapera, 2017). After artifacts, electricity, and machines, the emergence of digitalization is one of the important elements which then trigger the emergence of new mediums that radically cause massive social changes in society. (McMullan, 2020), and these new forms of media will always restore or update existing media, such as how Spotify updated the radio, or Skype updated the phone (McMullan, 2020).

In the Regional Head Election, the target of political communication is the voters. One form of political communication is campaigning. The campaign is carried out to increase the popularity and electability of political figures. (Gama, et al, 2019). All forms of political messages are communicated to the public who will cast their ballots or voters through various media, such as mass media or even new media (Gama, et al, 2019). One type of campaign technique commonly used by political figures is blusukan. In the 2020 Solo Regional Head Election, Gibran-Teguh used a blusukan strategy that was somewhat different from the one used before, namely via online or digital blusukan (Susanti, 2021). In doing this digital blusukan, Gibran-Teguh follows the traditional Javanese culture called nguri-nguri. They show these nguri by wearing typical Javanese clothes, namely lurik, using the Javanese language when communicating with the people ofSolo, and asking for the community's blessing by doing sungkem. (Susanti, 2021). Everything was done through a virtual box with a 49-inch monitor, which the Gibran-Teguh success team brought to people's homes (Susanti, 2020).

This study aims to describe the online blusukan strategy carried out by one of the pairs of candidates for Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Solo, namely Gibran - Teguh at the 2020 Regional Head Election which was held during a pandemic, and its relationship with the concept of Mass Society and Network Society from Jan Van Dijk and the reasons for this. - another reason why this campaign strategy is still being adjusted.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a conceptual paper that uses a descriptive qualitative approach and literature study research methods. As conceptual research, this paper does not present data but only focuses on integrating and suggesting new perspectives, relationships, or relationships from existing ideas (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015). In other words, conceptual research is not aimed at empirical testing but aims to develop logical and comprehensive arguments (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015).

According to Whetten (1989), conceptual research should be assessed based on the following 7 criteria, namely "(a) what's new? (b) So what? (c) Why so? (d) Well done? (e) Done well? (f) Why now? and (g) Who cares?" Gilson & Goldberg (2015) assume that a conceptual study does not have to discuss all of Whetten’s questions in detail, but researchers are obliged to focus on the question what's new? Conceptual research also does not have to propose a new theory but rather builds bridges between existing theories, connects research from various disciplines, and expands ways of thinking (Cropanzano, 2009).

While the literature study method was chosen for several reasons, including this
method providing a general overview of the research to be carried out, showing related studies that have been carried out before, finding new ideas and concepts or research novelties that have not been discussed before, finding shortcomings from previous research, and get a broader context from the current research (Knopf, 2006).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In Indonesia, a campaign strategy that is seen as effective in attracting votes from prospective voters is that the regional head candidate pair conducts blusukan (Gama, et al, 2019). Blusukan etymologically comes from the Javanese language, blusuk which means to enter. Blusukan can be interpreted as “entering a certain place to find out something” (Language Agency, n.d.). The candidates will go directly to the regions and have direct dialogue with the community. Even though the current era has entered the digital era, this blusukan strategy is still considered very important to introduce the candidates and their vision and mission directly to the public, and also to find out the complaints and expectations of citizens to the candidates.

Blusukan itself is still chosen as a campaign strategy that must be carried out for several reasons, first, blusukan is a method popularized by Gibran's father who currently serves as President of Indonesia, namely Joko Widodo, in every campaign he carries out. Both during the Solo Regional Head Election, the Jakarta Gubernatorial Election, and the Indonesian Presidential Election. This habit of blusukan makes Jokowi close to the image of a populist leader. A populist leader can evoke a sense of people solidarity by strengthening the values that live among the people as the foundation of the movement (Suradji & Martono, 2014). With blusukan, Jokowi can always be in the midst of the people (Zulkarnain & Harris, 2017). Gibran imitated his father's style with the same goal, wanting to build an image as a populist leader. A populist leader can evoke a sense of people solidarity by strengthening the values that live among the people as the foundation of the movement (Suradji & Martono, 2014). With blusukan, Jokowi can always be in the midst of the people (Zulkarnain & Harris, 2017). Gibran imitated his father's style with the same goal, wanting to build an image as a populist leader. In addition, blusukan also strengthens the image of being simple, close to the people, and unpretentious (Panuju, 2018). Blusukan has also been shown to increase the electability of candidates because the blusukan activity itself makes regional head candidates covered by the mass media and becomes a hot topic of public discussion on social media (Anggalia & Efriza, 2020). This high popularity is the beginning of increasing voter participation to be involved in donating their votes in general elections.

The state of the COVID-19 pandemic that is attacking the whole world along with the holding of the 2020 Regional Head Election democratic party has made the KPU issue a regulation that prohibits campaign activities that have the potential to create crowds, such as holding music concerts or public meetings. Most of the campaigns are carried out in cyberspace, using other media such as social media to convey programs, vision and mission, and work plans if elected. However, the two candidates for the Solo Regional Head Election, Gibran-Teguh and Bagyo-Supardjo, do not plan to carry out all campaign activities through online media. They think face-to-face is still much more effective. The door-to-door approach is still more meaningful than an online campaign. Online campaigns are also considered ineffective in increasing electability (BBC, 2020). In addition, there is also an infrastructure factor, where not all residents have internet access (BBC, 2020), so the house-to-house method is considered still to be done.

In the 2020 Solo Regional Head Election, the pair of candidates Gibran Rakabuming and Teguh Prakosa implemented a blusukan campaign strategy in the (online) network with the title election slamet wargane isoh ngliwet. The Gibran-Teguh success team brought a virtual campaign box that contained television sets, cameras, microphones, and wheels so that they were easy to move to be carried around areas and villages throughout Solo. The mechanism is that Gibran-Teguh who is at the winning post will interact with residents through video calls using an online campaign box device that is carried around the residents' homes. In this way, the Gibran-Teguh team can continue to visit and interact with Solo residents (Zamani, 2020) without having to violate health protocols and campaign rules during a pandemic.

Gibran-Teguh's strategy of conducting online visits using a virtual box or campaign box can also be considered appropriate if it is associated with the concept of Mass Society & Network Society from Van Dijk (2006). The people of Solo still meet the criteria for the definition of mass society, where the main infrastructure supporting the community is groups, communities, and organizations. Its
society consists of communities that are closely related. Gather together physically in one place, and still value face-to-face or face-to-face communication.

Based on BPS data from the 2020 census, Solo is also the most populous city in Central Java (Zamani, 2021). The Solo community is a society consisting of various ethnicities. In addition to the Javanese, there are also ethnic Arabs (Bazher, 2020), and ethnic Chinese who have lived and lived side by side with other ethnic groups in Solo (Tantomi 2016). Multi-ethnic communities will generally accept cultural changes more quickly (Jannah, 2014). Solo is also the center of tourism, economy, and education in Central Java. The progress of information and communication technology infrastructure is also quite adequate so that mediated forms of communication such as Gibran-Teguh’s in the online blusukan campaign can be carried out and are more easily accepted by the community. It is included in the important characteristics of the Network Society or network society. With that, the online blusukan campaign strategy carried out by the Gibran-Teguh couple is by the type of community in the city of Solo.

CONCLUSION

The 2020 simultaneous regional head elections are arguably unique because they were held during a pandemic that was hitting Indonesia. Many new regulations must be obeyed and cause the successful teams to innovate with their respective candidate campaign strategies. Advances in technology make it easier for candidates for regional heads to use social media and the internet for campaigning, but the different conditions of the Indonesian people in each region make candidates for regional heads unable to only use social media in campaigning. In some areas, face-to-face and blusukan tactics are still seen as the most effective in increasing the electability and popularity of candidates in the eyes of the public, strengthening the image of populist leaders, humble, and close to the people.

In metropolitan areas such as DKI Jakarta which is already classified as a Network Society where the media and social infrastructure are adequate, campaigns through social media may still be potentially effective, but in areas such as Solo, where the condition of the people can be classified as a combination of Mass Society and Network Society, blusukan is still felt obliged to do. The online blusukan campaign strategy used by the pair Gibran Rakabuming and Teguh Prakosa in the Solo Regional Head Election contestation is arguably the most suitable to be applied in the Solo area. With this strategy, Gibran-Teguh can still carry out blusukan, reaching people who rarely access the internet or even those who do not have internet access. At the same time, Gibran-Teguh is also able to comply with health protocols by not creating crowds when doing this online visit, because residents are still safe in their respective homes, while Gibran-Teguh greets them from the winning post. This strategy is considered effective and became one of the key factors in the victory of the Gibran - Teguh pair in the 2020 Solo Regional Head Election, although, of course, many other factors need to be considered and further research is done.

REFERENCES


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