Cross-Cutting Affiliation in Regional Election in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to reveal how the political background colors the political communication process in winning Abu (Muhammadiyah) and Lilik (Muslimat Nahdatul Ulama) in the 2018 regional election in Kediri City. This research uses qualitative research methods with instrumental case study approach, and we use data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews and documentation. The results show that the different political backgrounds of the candidates actually create cross-cutting affiliations between Muhammadiyah and NU Muslim society in Kediri City to provide support for Abu and Lilik in the Kediri City regional election. This cross-cutting affiliation is not created naturally, but is determined by '*Wong Tebangan*' as King Maker. Political lobbying by a *'Gus'* attracted support from several NU *kyai* in Kediri City. Then, holding regular NU Muslimat recitations and stall forums became a means of maintaining the integrity of support for attacks from other candidates. Finally, the research also revealed how Javanese beliefs, modern political instruments, and religion are used in winning elections.

Keywords: Local Election; Political Communication; Cross-Cutting Affiliation; Political Lobbying.

ABSTRAK

Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap bagaimana latar belakang politik mewarnai proses komunikasi politik dalam memenangkan Abu (Muhammadiyah) dan Lilik (Muslimat Nahdatul Ulama) pada Pilkada 2018 di Kota Kediri. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus instrumental, dan kami menggunakan teknik pengumpulan data berupa wawancara mendalam dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perbedaan latar belakang politik para kandidat justru menciptakan cross-cutting affiliation antara Muhammadiyah dan masyarakat Muslim NU di Kota Kediri untuk memberikan dukungan kepada Abu dan Lilik di Pilkada Kota Kediri. Afiliasi lintas sektoral ini tidak tercipta secara alami, tetapi ditentukan oleh 'Wong Tebangan' sebagai Raja Pembuat. Lobi politik oleh seorang 'Gus' menarik dukungan dari beberapa kyai NU di Kota Kediri. Kemudian, menggelar pengajian Muslimat NU secara rutin dan forum warung menjadi sarana menjaga keutuhan dukungan terhadap serangan calon lain. Terakhir, penelitian ini juga mengungkap bagaimana kepercayaan Jawa, instrumen politik modern, dan agama digunakan dalam memenangkan pemilu.

Kata Kunci: Pemilihan Kepala Daerah; Komunikasi Politik; Afiliasi Lintas Sektor; Lobi Politik.

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INTRODUCTION

This study departs from the fact that Abdullah Abu Bakar (Abu) and Lilik Muhibbah (Lilik) won the 2013 and 2018 regional elections in Kediri City. Abu-Lilik pair in fact has different political background; they come from the two most popular Islamic organizations that often take different positions. Abu has a background in a more minority mass organization, namely Muhammadiyah. Meanwhile, Lilik has a background with the NU Muslimat organization. We assume that the political background works inherently in the dynamics of the pair's victory in the regional election in Kediri City for two consecutive periods, which are 2013 and 2018. This assumption is strengthened by some studies, such as Coffé & Theiss-Morse (2016), Pedersen et al. (2019), and Tandoc-Juan et al. (2019), which point out that there is a significant correlation between the electability of political candidates and the political background of the candidates.

Research by Edwinarta and Dwijayanti (2018) confirms our assumption that Abu and Lilik's victory could not be separated from political communication from the elites of the Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama organizations. The elites of these two mass organizations are represented through the role of the *kyai* (Islamic Priest*)* as political communication in Islamic boarding schools. Furthermore, more studies from Masduki and Widyatama (2018) explain that the background of political candidates from Islamic organizations is an effective political communication strategy in forming a communication network to win the election contestation. Therefore, the strength of our assumption is that the background of the political identity of the Abu and Lilik is inherent in their victory in the 2013 and 2018 regional elections in Kediri City. However, it is not the sole determining factor, and other factors, namely economic factors and local wisdom, play a significant role.

The decisive role of the political background of Abu and Lilik in the 2013 and 2018 regional elections in Kediri City does not necessarily reduce the role of the political parties that carry the pair, namely the National Mandate Party - *Partai Amanat Nasional* (PAN) and the National Democratic Party (Nasdem). The supporting political parties also have a role in winning Abu and Lilik in the 2013 & 2018 regional elections in Kediri City. However, the role of political parties in winning the Pilkada is not due to party ideology that strengthens the political capital of the candidates they carry but tends to prioritize pragmatic and short-term political transactions (Tjahjoko, 2015). Research by Rosanti (2020) and Prastya et al. (2021) also explained that the Pilkada in Indonesia is a pragmatic political arena for political elites and political parties.

The political background of Abu and Lilik further emphasizes the authentic dynamics of the regional election in Kediri City. For example, the study of Mujib (2020) explains that people who are close to the culture of Islamic boarding schools (especially those residing within the scope of Islamic boarding schools) have a "*nderek dawuh kyai*" culture (always obey what kyai said) in determining their political choices. Therefore, we think that Lilik's organization's influence on the board of an Islamic boarding school (Al-Ishlah Bandar Kidul, Kediri City) and the head of the Muslimat Nahdatul Ulama in Kediri City become the political capital. At the same time, Abu has a background close to the Muhammadiyah. In fact, Priambodo (2019) asserts that *political background* related to Islamic Mass organizations will become the essential political capital to win an election.

The political background of the Abu and Lilik pair was not the sole factor that led them to victory in the 2018 Kediri City Election. The communication aspect is an important part to be studied further. We were referring to the explanation of Perloff (2014) and McNair (2011) that the consideration of citizens in choosing their leaders cannot be separated from the efforts of prospective leaders to implement appropriate political communication strategies to gain support and increase their level of electability in political contestations. This explanation shows the importance of political communication to win political candidates in political contestation. Therefore, it is essential to examine the process of political communication in the victory of the Abu and Lilik pair in the 2013 and 2018 regional elections in Kediri City.

Research on the trend of political background in political communication studies shows that the evaluation of the political background of candidates influences voters in election contestation. There have been much research; for instance, a study by Pedersen et al. (2019) discusses the impact of political background politics and candidate policy positions on voters' voting decisions. A study by Coffé & Theiss-Morse (2016) shows the influence of the political background and gender of the candidate on voters' perceptions of the candidate's competence in dealing with various policy issues. Then, Tandoc-Juan et al. (2019) research show the candidate's personal and political background from the student's viewpoint as a voter. Coffé & von Schoultz (2021) examine the influence of the

candidate's political background from sociodemographics, competence, experience, issues, and party affiliation on voter preferences and possible considerations for choosing other candidates. Moreover, Campos-Valdés et al. (2021) explore the influence of candidate profiles (personal and political background) and political campaign efforts on election results in Chile.

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Meanwhile, research in Indonesia shows the characteristics of the political background of the candidate in the election contests; for example, a study by Mahsun et al. (2021) reviews the political background of female Muslim candidates and Fatayat Nahdatul Ulama in winning local political contestations by gaining votes from grassroots. Kabullah & Fajri (2021) review the political background of 'Neo Ibusm' of female candidates in West Sumatra who are active in the public sphere and elections. Then, a study by Yanuarti (2018) reviews' military' as the political background of candidates in elections in Indonesia. Also, Zakina (2016) reviews the political background of candidates who come from minorities who are able to create cross-cutting affiliations of the Dayak and Islamic communities in West Kalimantan. Finally, Edwinarta & Dwijayanti (2018) review the political communication of elite Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama organizations in supporting the Abu-Lilik pair in the 2013 Kediri City Election.

Departing from our assumptions and the description of the problem, the political background of Abu (Muhammadiyah Organization – minority in Kediri City) and Lilik (Chairman of Muslimat Nahdatul Ulama Kediri City) influences the political communication process in the 2018 election victory. However, no specific study still examines the political background in shaping the political communication process. Therefore, we formulate the research question as follows: how did the political background color the political communication process in the victory of the Abu-Lilik pair in the 2018 regional election? Thus, our research will contribute to the study of political communication by conceptualizing the relationship between political background and the process of political communication in electoral contestation.

METHODS
This study uses a constructivist paradigm as a world view of the phenomenon of Abu and Lilik's winning in the 2018 regional elections in Kediri City. The paradigm is used especially in viewing the political communication process, which is colored by differences in the political background of Abu (Muhammadiyah and PAN - a Political Party bases on Muhammadiyah members) and Lilik (Nahdatul Ulama). The constructivist paradigm is helpful for us as a worldview to build in-depth knowledge based on the natural setting of the phenomenon under study (Neuman & Robson, 2018). Then, this study uses a qualitative approach, as meant by Neuman & Robson (2018). A qualitative approach will produce data in the form of a thick description of the phenomenon under study based on its natural setting, namely the political background colored the political communication process in the victory of Abu and Lilik in the 2018 regional election in Kediri City.

The researchers employ an instrumental case study method to answer the formulation of the research problem, namely how the political background colors the political communication process in winning the Abu-Lilik pair in the 2018 Kediri City Election. As Neuman & Robson (2018) say, the case study is a research method that places the research problem as a 'case', an event in a system bound by a certain space and time. According to Mills et al. (2010), the instrumental case study method is used to describe cases that are partial in a comprehensive manner, cases that are partial means that these cases do not only occur in one place. The case in this study is the victory of the Abu-Lilik pair in the 2018 Kediri City Election, which cannot be separated from their political backgrounds from the Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama organizations.

This study's data collection techniques include in-depth interviews and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with Lilik (Vice Mayor), AN (Political Consultant), Qowimmudin Thoha (Head of the Success Team), and ZA (Member of the Success Team). The interview mechanism is carried out by preparing an interview guide in advance and developing it according to the answers from the informants. Then, documentation is used to obtain documents that can explain research problems. The documents were collected from the succeeding team and documents from political consultants that contain the communication process of Abu and Lilik in the 2018 Kediri City Election. The data that has been collected will be analyzed using a proprietary interactive analysis technique Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014), which includes the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and verification/conclusion. Then, the data validity technique in this study will use triangulation of data sources so that qualitative-based data can be accounted for their credibility.

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Cross-Cutting Afilliation' Muhammadiyah-Nahdatul Ulama' as a Political Identity

The background of Abu from the Muhammadiyah (Islamic Community Organisation) and Lilik from the Nahdatul Ulama (NU - another Islamic Community Organisation) potentially became a political identity for the pair in the 2018 regional election in Kediri City. Political identity is conceptually different from identity politics. Hill & Wilson (2003) and Meléndez & Kaltwasser (2019) explain that political identity is a subject construction (politician) that determines a position in a political community. Meanwhile, identity politics is an identity organizer to make a difference, namely between who is accepted as his group and who is rejected because he is not his group. According to Qowimmudin Thoha (Qowim), the Leader of the Success Team from Abu and Lilik, his team carefully prevents employing identity politics. Using identity politics could potentially break the harmony of the people of Kediri City (Personal interview with Qowimmudin Thoha, September 28, 2019). Some literature does mention that the consequence of identity politics is polarization in society (Afrimadona, 2021; Sahabi & Nacho, 2020; Ubaid & Subandi, 2017), and the success of this team is shown by the short duration of the emergence of identity politics issues during the regional election.

Furthermore, Qowim explained that Lilik's political identity as the Chair of NU Muslimat could not be denied her high electability to accompany Abu in the Kediri City Election. Most NU Muslimat members in Kediri are impossible not to vote for Lilik. Qowim wisely emphasized the NU Muslimat Members' belief in Lilik as their religious mother. It is impossible for them to vote for others (Interview with Qowimmudin Thoha, September 28, 2019).

According to AZ, Lilik's background, the Head of NU Muslimat in Kediri City is the most dominant political capital. This capital is due to the splitting of the votes of the *Nahdliyin* (NU cultural community) members because other candidates received support from the NU organizational structure of Kediri City. In fact, Aizzudin Abdurahman-Sujono was promoted by the PKB Party, Golkar Party, and Gerindra Party. The other pair, Samsul Ashar-Juniadi, was supported by the PDI-P and the Hanura Party. However, Lilik's positioning as chairman of the Kediri City NU Muslimat remains the dominant political identity as political capital in the 2018 regional election in Kediri City (Interview AZ, June 14, 2022).

Meanwhile, Abu's political identity as a candidate from the Muhammadiyah organization is not very prominent compared to his deputy from NU. According to AN, as a political consultant for Abu and Lilik, Abu's political identity from the Muhammadiyah does not need to be highlighted in the political campaign process because it does not significantly influence his electability and the people of Kediri City. The latter are labeled Muhammadiyah as not the majority. Therefore, the political identity highlighted by Abu is more of a millennial leader and is close to the community. The following is an excerpt from an interview with a political consultant AN:

"[...] Mas Abu iyaa dari Muhammadiyah, tapi tidak terlalu signifikan, kalah besar dengan NU kalau di Kediri. Kita tonjolkan Mas Abu itu pemimpin yang mewakili millennials, karena ini perlu disentuh eee istilahnya diakomodir, dan Mas Abu punya dasar untuk itu [...] (Mas Abu is from Muhammadiyah that is not a big organization as NU. We will place Mas Abu as a representation of millennial generation. Mas Abu will be able to handle that) *"* (Wawancara dengan AN, 9 Desember 2019).

However, it is undeniable that Abu's political identity from the Muhammadiyah also became the political capital in the 2018 regional election in Kediri City. AN also explained that Abu's background in Muhammadiyah indirectly contributed to his election as mayor because of his closeness to one of the Muhammadiyah elites in Indonesia. Therefore, the city of Kediri earned him support (Interview with AN, December 09, 2019). The Chairman of the Success Team, Qowimmudin Thoha, also explained that Abu's closeness to the elite of the Muhammadiyah made him get supporters from the Muhammadiyah community of Kediri City. This support happened because the dogmatic of Kyai in the Muhammadiyah Ormas was still quite strong. Here is an excerpt from the interview:

"[... "] The existence of an elite on one side of the Abu and Lilik makes Muhammadiyah support can be said to flow to the pair, considering that in the Muhammadiyah organization itself, as has been

said before, it tends to be dogmatic following the thinking of the ruling and influential elite in Muhammadiyah" (Interview with Qowimmudin Thoha, September 28, 2019).

The quote above also clearly shows that Abu's political identity from the Muhammadiyah and PAN (A political party based on Muhammadiyah members) is a political capital to gain votes from the people of Kediri City, especially those who are culturally bound to Muhammadiyah. Meanwhile, according to Qowimmudin Thoha, Lilik's identity, which is closely related to Nahdatul Ulama and the caretaker of the Islamic boarding school, must indirectly influence her level of electability. It is like "Mbakyu "(Lilik) must have heard of it, so Muslimat members will go to this pair (Lilik must be). Listen to Nahdatul Ulama Muslimat so that Muslimat will choose Abu and Lilik as partner)" (Interview with Qowimmudin Thoha, September 28, 2019). This finding shows that the differences in the political identity attached to the pair of Abu and Lilik have become their political capital for the pair.

Findings regarding the differences in the identities of Abu and Lilik, which became political capital in the 2018 Kediri City Elections, were a form of cross-cutting affiliation from two different political communities, namely the Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama communities, which integrated to elect Abu and the Lilik pair. The form of cross-cutting affiliation in other regional elections was also found in research by Zakina (2016) in the 2007 Kalimantan Local Election. There was a cross-cutting affiliation between religious communities (Protestant-Catholic) and indigenous peoples (Dayak) to elect the Cornelis-Christianity pair as Governor of West Kalimantan.

The cross-cutting affiliation in Abu and Lilik'sLilik'sy was the integration of two community organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul UIama, to choose a candidate for mayor and deputy mayor, namely Abu and Lilik, in the 2018 regional election in Kediri City. The cross-cutting affiliation found in this study is a finding of its authenticity because, in some cases, the political attitudes of Nahdatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah are opposite in political contestation (Al-Ansi et al., 2019; Ishomuddin, 2014). The findings of this study, at the same time, show that differences in the political identity of a political actor are not an obstacle in political contestation but can instead become political capital if appropriately managed.

The cross-cutting affiliation in the 2013 and 2018 regional elections in Kediri City did not occur naturally. This affiliation only happened based on a political setting initiated by a third party. According to AZ, a member of the Success Team and a relative of Lilik, this cross-cutting affiliation has occurred since the first period, namely the 2013 Kediri City Election. AZ explained that this third party does not have a direct affiliation with political organizations (political parties, community organizations, pressure organizations et al., see elements of political communication (McNair, 2011) but has closeness to the grassroots level of society in Kediri (AZ Interview on June 14, 2022).

The findings above show that the concept of elements of political communication belonging to McNair (2011) cannot be represented or implemented at the local election in Indonesia because the position of third parties that regulate cross-cutting affiliation as a form of political communication cannot be identified or classified into elements of political communication offered by McNair (2011). The research also found that the third party significantly played a King Maker in cross-cutting affiliation from different political backgrounds, The Muhammadiyah, PAN, and the Muslimat Nahdatul Ulama. The King Maker's role is played by an ordinary person who is not affiliated with a political party, is unwell educated, is an unskilled worker, and is not a formal leader. However, he has good communication skills and relationships with most people. From a socio-ethnic perspective, we call this *Wong Tebangan.*

Our research also finds a distinctively eastern perspective that combines rationale, Javanese philosophy, and Islamic philosophy in cross-cutting affiliation examples. Rationally, the electability of Abu from Muhammadiyah and the strong electability of Lilik from the NU Muslimat residents of Kediri City would help the victory. The Javanese philosophy means reading natural cues, which are discussed as *'pulung'* victory for Lilik. Meanwhile, Islamic philosophy can be seen by the prayers for guidance (through the *Istikharah* prayer) regarding the decision to unite Abu and Lilik in the 2013 and 2018 regional elections in Kediri City.

Political Lobbying to Kyai

Kediri is one of the cities in East Java with a high community base of *"santri"* (Islamic boarding school students). This label is shown by the ratio of the number of students of 6.76% compared to the population in the City of Kediri so that the City of Kediri is often dubbed the City of Santri (Kediri

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City Government, 2021). In political contestations, the Pondok Pesantren (boarding schools) do not go unnoticed by political actors who will participate in political contestation (Mujib, 2020; Priambodo, 2019). However, this does not rule out the potential of Islamic Boarding Schools in Kediri City to gain political support.

Lilik's former experiences as a boarding school administrator (Al-Ishlah Bandarkidul, City of Kediri) and Chairman of the Muslimat of Kediri City have indirectly had an impact by getting support from "santri" and female students in Kediri City. According to AN, the selection of Lilik as a candidate for the deputy mayor for Abu is the right strategy to get the votes of Muslimat members and students at the Kediri City Islamic Boarding School. It was because Abu did not yet have high electability in Islamic boarding schools, especially those based on the Nahdatul Ulama culture. The following is an excerpt from an interview with political consultant AN from Abu and Lilik:

"[...] "here is no doubt that Ning Lik (Lilik) is not trivial, starting from Ning Lik is a Muslimat figure, which we know kediri city is mostly women and muslimat organizations are very large in Kediri City" (Interview with AN, December 09, 2019).

Despite a background (political identity), Lilik had an impact with the support of Muslimat Nahdatul Ulama and Santri Pondok Pesantren. However, political strengthening by establishing relations with the Kyai Pondok Pesantren in Kediri City is still carried out, especially by Abu as a candidate for mayor in the 2018 Kediri City Regional Election. Abu did "Sowan" to the Kyai of Islamic Boarding Schools in Kediri City, especially those with Nahdatul Ulama culture. "Sowan" was carried out to establish *ukhwuah* as well as to ask for the blessing of the Kyai for him to contest the 2018 Kediri City Regional Elections. Qawwimuddin Toha revealed this tradition as the Head of the Winning Team for the Abu and Lilik, along with excerpts from the interview:

"Mas Abu sowan to Pesantren, yaa weave the first ukhwah. Also definitely asking for blessings to advance in Pilwali. Although, in essence, we ask for blessings, NU also has a national political stance based on the NU khittah. So I do for it, apart from the fact that Mbakyu is no longer accompanied by Mas Ad (Lilik'sLilik's) [...]" (Interview with Qowimmudin Thoha, September 28, 2019).

Abu's activity of *"sowan"* to charismatic Islamic scholars of Islamic traditional boarding schools in Kediri is part of political lobbying. According to Christiansen (2020), simply lobbying is a political strategy carried out through communication activities to negotiate political interests. Meanwhile, Ardianto et al. (2020) explained that *political lobbying* is carried out to convey political interests while getting political support for political policies/decisions to be taken. In line with this explanation, the "sowan" that Abu did to the Kyai Pondok Pesantren was to get blessings/permits (support) in the political contestation of the 2018 regional election in Kediri City.

The *"sowan"* activity to the Kyai was not thoroughly carried out by Abu but was assisted by the Head of the Winning Team, namely Qowimmudin Thoha. According to Qowimmudin Thoha, the *"sowan"* to the Kyai was a sequence of the "sowan" "carried out by Abu because his campaign agenda demanded that the mayoral candidate carry out another agenda. Here is an excerpt from the interview:

"[...] but he was not capable of his energy, not strong. only 2 if not 3 times. *"wes gus, lak ngene carane kulo mboten kuat gus"* (Gus, if the situasion is like this, I'm not strong enough Gus"), "*la pripun terserah njenengan, bagaimana kalau tetap kita jalankan tapi saya yang melakukan", "nggeh mpun malah tepak gus, tepak niku*", lalu kita jalan [...] (if Mas Abu trust me, please let me do it) " (Interview with Qowimmudin Thoha, September 28, 2019).

Political Lobbying, which Qowimmudin Thoha continued, was also inseparable from his background as the administrator of the Islamic Boarding School (Al-Ishlah) and himself, who had known the Kyai of the Islamic Boarding School in Kediri City. In addition, *Political lobbying,* which is realized through "sowan" to the Kyai is the idea of Qowimmudin Thoha, where he does have an affinity with the Kyai Pondok Pesantren, who have political attitudes. This finding further emphasizes that Kyai at Pondok Pesantren has indeed become an element in politics in Indonesia, so its role cannot be ruled out casually, especially in shaping the opinions of its students.

The culture of "sowan" to the Kyai in traditional Islamic boarding schools (As Abu and Qowimmudin Thoha did) in politics in Indonesia is not new, as (Zuliansyah et al. (2017) dan Mujib (2020) explain that "sowan" Kyai culture is carried out by politicians in Indonesia to get blessings and support. Even Mujib (2020) explaining the culture of "sowan" is intended to ask for particular "diplomacy or prayers to be recited by politicians so that it is facilitated and gains victory in political contestation as this was done by Abu and Lillik, who carried out *political lobbying* through the "sowan" Kyai in Kediri City.

The findings *of Political Lobbying* through the "sowan" of Kyaii Pondok Pesantren conducted by Abu and Lillik show the typical behavior of political communication from *non-western* political actors who are closely related to cultural and theological dimensions (Inoguchi, 2015). Then, kyai's culture became part of Islamic political communication, inherent in Indonesia's political system dynamics, including in the 2018 Kediri City Regional Election. The relationship between political lobbying realized through the "sowan" of Kyai by Abu and Lilik is inseparable from the characteristics of the political audience of Kediri City, where the political audience of the student group has the dogmatic to follow the decisions of his Kyai.

Political Surveys as Guidelines for the Preparation of Political Communication

Abu and Lilik used a political consultant in the 2018 Kediri City Regional Election. The political consultant was from one of the institutions in the city of Surabaya, Lembaga P (Institution Name disguised). Political Consultants from Lembaga P have been used by Abu and Lilik since the 2013 Regional Elections, then for the reason of compatibility to be used again in the 2018 Regional Elections. This study found several political consultant P roles in winning the Abu and Lilik in the 2018 Kediri City Regional Election. These roles include:

Conducting a political survey was carried out by the P Institution due to the client's request, namely Abu and Lilik. Political surveys from Institution P are carried out in an organized and systematic manner through three main stages. *First, a snapshot survey* is a survey stage that is carried out to see the mapping of choices or see the strengths of candidates for candidates in a certain period and is carried out through a quantitative basis with questionnaires given to the public of potential voters in political contestation. This stage or type of survey can be carried out long before the voting is carried out to get a picture of voters. Likewise, this survey can be carried out ahead of polling day to know the potential votes obtained by candidates.

The results of snapshot surveys conducted in the period long ago (5-6 months) before the regional elections can be used as a guide to developing a political communication strategy. The reason is that the survey results of the picture of potential voters have been obtained. Therefore, it can be a reference in making a political communication strategy to reach the public as potential voters. These findings are prevalent in studies of survey agencies and political communications. As Perloff (2014) explained, political survey agencies have an essential role in political communication, especially knowing the growing public opinion and as a framework for formulating political campaign strategies.

Nevertheless, according to AN political consultant from Institution P, the survey snapshot has the disadvantage of not being able to see the movement of public opinion over time since it is only carried out once in a predetermined period. However, snapshot surveys are a type of political survey that can be said to be economical because they do not require much cost to clients. Here is an excerpt from the interview:

"*Whatever the purpose, the survey is carried out once only. So, the advantage of this package is that it saves costs. However, because it is done once, the downside is that we cannot record the movement of the voters. So, we cannot know the votes of voters from time to time*" (Interview with AN, December 09, 2019).

Therefore, clients of political candidates (the spouses of Abu and Lilik) will continue the election at the next stage of the survey to obtain complete data for preparing political communication strategies and campaign products during the Election period.

Second, *the survey panel* is conducted to measure public opinion, carried out periodically (longitudinally). Unlike the *snapshot survey,* which only measures public opinion within a certain period, this survey aims to conduct surveys periodically within a certain period. The tracking survey aims to compare, over time, the movement of public opinion. Technically, *the survey panel is* also quantitative, with questionnaires disseminated to the public who are potential voters.

The results of a *survey panel* that identifies the movement of public opinion over time help evaluate the political communication carried out by Abu and Lilik. This statement was conveyed by AN political consultant from Institution P. Besides, according to him, the use of *the survey panel* chosen by his client, Abu and Lilik, helped determine their electability level over time. In other words, the rise and fall of the level of electability during the campaign can be known. These results can be used to evaluate political communication strategies related to the accuracy of the chosen

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strategy that has succeeded in increasing the electability of Abu and Lilik in the 2018 Kediri City Regional Election. Here is an excerpt from an interview with AN:

"A panel is a survey for measuring public opinion carried out periodically (*longitudinally*). The purpose of tracking surveys is to compare the movement of public opinion from one time to another. Thus, the survey panel not only has the potential to photograph public opinion but also captures the movements and changes in public opinion and how voters vote from one time to another, whether the candidate is up or down. If it goes up, why, and if it goes down, what is the reason? Survey panels are also useful for evaluating whether the strategy taken by regional head candidates is useful or not in boosting electability. Otherwise, what strategy can be taken and so on" (Interview with AN, December 09, 2019).

Third, a *tracking survey* is a type of survey conducted to record the movement of votes' voters, Similar to the *survey panel*. The *tracking survey* was carried out several times. The difference between *the survey panel* and *the survey track* is that the respondents interviewed, the *survey panel* uses the same respondents to be interviewed in stages. In contrast, *the survey tracking* uses different respondents to be interviewed in stages. The *tracking survey* will be carried out ahead of the polling day in the regional elections. This polling is done to know the growing public opinion about the pair of Abu and Lilik. Here is an excerpt from an interview with a political consultant AN, explaining this:

"[...] Survey tracking is like a survey panel. Both are intended to record the movement of voters' Similar to the survey panel. Survey tracking is carried out several times. The difference is in the interviewees. On the survey panel, interviews will be conducted with the same respondents (the same person). While on survey tracking, the interviewees differed from one time to another but were taken with the same procedure and population. The instruments used and the method of sampling is the same from one period to another" (Interview with AN, December 09, 2019).

According to Qowimmudin Thoha (Head of the Winning Team), the existence of Institution P, which conducts surveys and provides input on political communication strategies, is very helpful in implementing the campaign. For example, mapping the people of Kediri City regarding their choices: for groups of people who already have a political attitude to choose Abu and Lilik, the political communication strategy taken by the winning team is to take care of the political attitude or the level of electability. Meanwhile, for groups of people whose political attitudes have not made a choice or chosen another candidate, the political communication strategy taken is to persuade the group to divert political attitudes to choose the spouse of Abu and Lilik. Here is an excerpt from the interview:

"[...] There needs to be assistance from the survey. So, what is the public's judgment of important issues in the Kediri region today? What issues are considered important? What is their attitude? [...] What programs do voters want? What policies do local voters need? What actions do voters think are important to take? What priority they want can only be done by survey agencies [...] I determined the political communication strategy from the survey results" (Interview with Qowimmudin Thoha, September 28, 2019).

This finding shows a relationship between political consultants (*surveyors*) and the winning team of pairs in political contestations, such as the 2018 Kediri City Regional Election. Political consultants of Institution P conducted a proper political survey for recommendations for the winning team. Furthermore, the pair's success team (together with political consultants) followed up by developing the right political communication strategy to achieve the victory of Abu and Lilik in the 2018 Kediri City Regional Election. This sequence explains the relationship between political consultants, the winning team, and political communication strategies to win political contestation.

Door-to-Door and Positive Campaign as a Political Communication Strategy

The role of the Political Consultant of Lembaga P, as previously outlined, has a close correlation with the political communication strategy used by Abu and Liliks in the 2018 regional election in Kediri City. The P Institute, with the Winning Team, devised two political communication strategies for Abu and Lilik. Uniquely, two political communication strategies, namely door-to-door, were implemented directly by Abu and Lilik. In contrast, the *positive campaign* strategy was implemented with the collaboration of the Winning Team. Here is Here's in-depth description of the two political communication strategies:

First, *door-to-door* is a political communication strategy carried out by Abu and Lilik during the campaign period leading up to the election. Abu and Lilik implemented this strategy by meeting with residents in person and visiting residents in their homes. In political marketing, communication

strategies include being part of *direct communication* to communicate directly face-to-face from the leading candidate to his political constituents (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2015). In Indonesia, this kind of political communication strategy is commonly used by leadership candidates, both in legislative and executive elections (Danil & Fitri, 2021).

According to Lilik, *the door-to-door* strategy is to communicate directly with residents and as a *'silahturahmi'* to get closer and strengthen brotherhood with the residents of Kediri City. *"The silaturahmi part is also with the residents, a form of serving directly [...] to strengthen relations with citizens"* (Interview with Lilik, January 27, 2020). The diction expression 'Silaturrahmi' from' Lilik shows a process of political communication that runs on the value of Islam, meaning that communication is not just a process of conveying messages or building relationships as in the western perspective, but also from an eastern perspective, especially Islam, which teaches brotherhood between citizens or known as *Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman.*

The use of *the door-to-door* strategy by Abu and Lilik is inseparable from the context of the regional geography of Kediri City. As explained by the Leader of the Winning Team, namely Qowimmudin Thoha, the *door-to-door* strategy effectively communicates political programs from candidates because it is carried out directly with residents face-to-face and by shaking hands. This strategy is inseparable from Kediri City, which only has three sub-districts (Mojoroto, Kota, and Pesantren) which are not too broad, so it is possible to carry out a *door-to-door* strategy. The following is an excerpt from an interview with the Winning Team Leader:

"Door-to-door, our victory is because Kediri is a small city. So that we door to door the time is enough, if the city is wide, the county is large. For example, consisting of more than 24 sub-districts, the village is up to hundreds, and the task may be much heavier. To maintain our trust in the people, who were then not shaken by the campaigns of other candidates, was also not much in Kediri [...]" (Interview with Qowimmudin Thoha, September 28, 2019).

The door-to-door strategy is not only to deliver programs and bring candidates closer to the community but also a strategy to care for preconceived electability. This strategy worked adequately to support the electability of Abu and Lilik. They have been strong because of their position as the incumbent. This strong electability is maintained by going *door-to-door*. However, according to Qowimuddin Thoha, although electability has been strong, door-to-door is a vital strategy to safeguard constituents. This strategy is crucial due to the pair of other candidates who use the mobilization strategy of community organizations that can weaken the electability of Abu and Lilik. Here is an excerpt from the interview:

"Yesterday that is that is done, the communities that have been entrusting their choice to us, "was I still maintained, stay awake" (I keep caring of it, maintaining it up). So inevitably, we must be door to door, guard, and continue to accompany until the election is made. Had a shake? It happened (yes, because some candidates use the power of civic organizations" (Interview with Qowimmudin Thoha, September 28, 2019).

Lilik also explained that *the door-to-door* strategy is also used as an instrument of political participation, making people participate in the 2018 regional election in Kediri City. However, political participation is only partly to be achieved. The door-to-door strategy is also an instrument for collecting data for recruiting political partisans who will support Abdullah Abubakar and Lilik in the 2018 Kediri City Regional Elections. These political partisans will be organized into volunteers tasked with assisting in the campaign process, caring for constituents, and escorting Abu and Liliks in the 2018 Kediri City Regional Elections. Here is An excerpt from the interview with Lilik:

"During "the door-to-door campaign, we conducted data collection on residents to provide support at the polling station to the Abu *and Lilik"* (Lilik interview – January 27, 2020)

Furthermore, *the positive campaign* strategy, Abu and Lilik used the positive campaign strategy by socializing their success during their first term as Mayor and Deputy Mayor. These successes include the development of Kediri City, the provision of *Prodamas* incentives which became a distributive political program to improve the welfare of the people of Kediri City. This finding shows that the *potential positive campaign* strategy is applied by a candidate who already has a *track record* in the political field, especially for a person with the status of an incumbent. This is because they have a program that has been run and can be used as content in *positive campaigns.*

A positive campaign as a political communication strategy is not something new in the process of political contestation. Some studies show that this positive campaign strategy is an effort to build the image of political candidates in society. This image is expected to bring out positive perceptions from the public toward candidates who will contest and increase the electability of candidates (Malloy &

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Pearson-Merkowitz, 2016). Abu and Liliks use this strategy to show presentations and programs that will positively impact residents, for example, by campaigning for the Prodamas program, which has been successfully implemented in the previous term of office (Haliim, 2019).

According to Lilik, the *positive campaign* seeks to focus on the programs offered to the community. In addition, he and Abu are trying to position themselves as *problem solvers* to the problems faced by the community.

"When the campaign, we commit not to blaspheme, convey real things and touch with the community's needs. We have also studied all the problems in the city of Kediri and are looking for alternative solutions to solve problems in Kediri" (Interview with Llilik, January 27, 2020).

This evidence *confirms that a positive campaign* conceptually places communication as an instrument for the candidate who cannot focus on his political opponents. Unlike the case with *negative campaigns* that focus more on their political opponents, namely the negative/bad things of their political opponents being campaigned for (Haselmayer, 2019; Walter et al., 2014).

In the 2018 regional election in Kediri City, Abu and Lilik were the ones who received *negative campaigns* from other candidates. According to the campaign leader, Qowimmudin Thoha, the *negative campaign* obtained during the campaign period was more towards highlighting the performance of Abu and Lilik during the previous period. According to Qowimmudin Thoha, this was done by other candidates to make the people indecisive in choosing the Abu and Lilik. *Negative campaigning* is not a form of crime in political dynamics because it seeks to highlight the ugliness/failure of other candidates – in contrast to *black campaigns,* which are legally prohibited. After all, they relate to slander, the spread of fake news, money politics, and other deviant political behaviour (Pamungkas & Arifin, 2019).

*Abu and Lilik*s also obtained the black campaign in the 2018 regional election in Kediri City. The destruction of outdoor campaign media such as banners, banners, and props was in the form of tearing. Another black campaign narrates the solution to the NU Muslimat Kediri City (Lilik's supporters base). This solution narrative is carried out by giving groceries and verbal incitement not to support Lilik (such as Lilik not raising PCNU and more heavily to other mass organizations). However, according to AZ, the black campaign obtained by Abu and Lilik was changed by King Maker (a third party) and the Success Team Leader by making it a positive campaign to gain the sympathy of the community and Muslims of NU Kediri City (AZ Interview on June 14, 2022). Thus, the black campaign that was supposed to harm Abu and Liliks turned into an advantage because it was turned into a *positive campaign*.

CONCLUSION

Our research concludes that the political background of Abu and Lilik coloured the political communication process in the victory of the 2018 regional election in Kediri City with *cross-cutting affiliation* between Muhammadiyah residents and NU Muslimat residents of Kediri City to support the Abu and Lilik. This *cross-cutting affiliation* was initiated by King Maker (a third party who has an affinity with Lilik) by utilizing a different political background from Abu, who came from Muhamadiyah, and Lilik from NU Muslimat Kediri City. Then, *the political lobbying* efforts carried out by the leader of the Success Team through the *'sowan'* culture to the Kyai of Islamic Boarding Schools in Kediri City were carried out in order to get the blessing and support of the Abu and Lilik in the Kediri City 2018 regional elections. The political communication process is also based on the results of political survey data carried out by political consultant X (from Surabaya); political surveys are carried out through three stages, including *snapshot surveys, survey* panels, and *survey tracking*. Then, Abu and Lilik also carried out *door-to-door* and *positive campaign* strategies to get support, increase electability, and maintain the electability of the community towards Abu and Liliks in the 2018 regional election in Kediri City.

Our research has limitations on descriptive qualitative methodologies that have implications for data findings. In other words, our research is still limited to describing the political communication process of Abu and Lilik in the 2013 and 2018 regional elections in Kediri City, which are colored by different political backgrounds. Therefore, we advise subsequent researchers to conduct research using the case study method by focusing on the role of King Maker in determining the political communication process of Abu and Lilik in the 2018 regional election in Kediri City. In addition, further research may be taking other cases that have transferability with the results of our research,

namely regarding the role of King Maker in determining the political communication process of candidates in the contestation of the regional elections.

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