

Political Communication and Electoral Success in Sugihrejo Village, Pati Regency, Indonesia

Author:

Ya Hanna Erviana¹, David Erwin Mayor², Aldio Surya Dirga³, Muhammad Takiyuddin Ismail⁴

e-Mail:

yahannaerviana@gmail.com¹, david@ipdn.ac.id², aldio.suryadirga@ipdn.ac.id³, taki@ukm.edu.my⁴

Affiliation:

¹Central Java Regional Government, Letjen Suprpto Street 31, Tanjung Mas, North Semarang, Semarang City, Central Java (50137), **Indonesia**

^{2,3}Governance Institute of Home Affairs (IPDN), Jl. Ir. Soekarno KM 20 Jatinangor, Sumedang, West Java (45363), **Indonesia**

⁴Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor (43600), **Malaysia**

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ABSTRACT

Background: The political communication ability of a prospective leader is one of the main factors that contribute to the victory in the contest of democratic elections. The phenomenon of a village head winning in Sugihrejo Village, Gabus Sub-district, Pati Regency in his second term of leadership was supported by effective political communication skills during the democratic election campaign. The formulation of the research problem includes questions about the influence and how much influence political communication has on the victory of Tri Setyanto's figure in the village head election in the region. **Purpose:** This research aims to investigate the influence of political communication conducted by Sugihrejo Village Head Figure Tri Setyanto on his victory in the Sugihrejo Village head election in Gabus Sub-district, Pati Regency in his second leadership period. **Method:** The research method used is a correlational method with a quantitative approach, which utilises statistical analysis to manage the data obtained. The research sample was determined based on the Permanent Voters List (DPT) at the Village Head Election in Sugihrejo Village in 2019, assuming that the DPT reflects the voter base directly involved in the democratic process. **Results:** The results show that there is a significant influence between political communication and the victory of Tri Setyanto in the village head election in Sugihrejo Village, Gabus Sub-district, Pati Regency. This is reinforced by the results of the simple linear regression test which shows a calculated t value that is much greater than the t table value, as well as the results of the Rank Spearman correlation hypothesis test which shows a positive and very strong relationship between the two variables. The coefficient of determination test results show that the independent variable (Political Communication) has an influence of 73.2% on the dependent variable (Tri Setyanto's victory in the democratic election), while other variables not included in this research model provide 26.8% influence on Tri Setyanto's victory in the democratic election. From the results of the standard beta coefficient test, it is found that the care indicator has the highest influence on the Victory variable. **Conclusion:** The conclusion of this study is that there is a significant influence between variable X (Political Communication) and Variable Y (Victory in democratic elections). The implication of this study confirms the importance of effective political communication from the Village Head in supporting the achievement of victory in a democratic election contest.



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Corresponding Author:

Email: yahannaerviana@gmail.com

Affiliation: Central Java Regional Government, Letjen Suprpto Street 31, Tanjung Mas, North Semarang, Semarang City, Central Java (50137), **Indonesia**

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Village head elections (Pilkades), a concrete demonstration of public involvement in directly selecting their local leaders under Indonesia's democratic system, have created more opportunities for the public to assess candidates based on performance, credibility, and communication techniques. Here, a candidate's capacity to successfully connect with the public through political communication becomes a major consideration in generating support and winning an election. The re-election of Tri Setyanto as Head of Sugihrejo Village in the 2019 Pilkades is the basis of this research. His triumph shows the great faith the community has in his leadership, which results not only from the development projects he introduced but also from his particular political communication style. Tri Setyanto is known as a friendly and approachable leader who purposefully utilizes social media to disseminate information, foster debate, and maintain emotional closeness with the residents.

Through empathy and homophily theories, which hold that leaders who understand and reflect the values, culture, and interests of their constituents are more likely to gain trust and loyalty, his political messaging is studied. Many people think that this element is a major driver of his second-term success. The research sets out to investigate how political communication affects electoral success by means of this case study and to provide an understanding of the growth of political communication theory and practice.

1.2 Problem

Although many studies have investigated political communication within the framework of regional or village head elections, a knowledge gap remains regarding how homophily- and empathy-based political communication contributes to a candidate's success in a specific local context. Most earlier studies have focused either on overall communication techniques or on particular voter groups, including students or urban communities. Few, however, have researched statistically how a village head candidate's communication plan within a rural community distinguished by distinct social structures can greatly impact electoral success in immediate elections

Another identified gap lies in the research methodology. Most previous studies have employed qualitative methods to analyze political communication, whereas this study adopts a quantitative method with a correlational approach to statistically assess the impact of political communication on village head election outcomes. Additionally, the novelty of this research is evident in its focus on applying the theories of empathy and homophily in political communication within the context of local leadership—an area that has been rarely explored in depth in previous literature, particularly in Pati Regency. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to a better understanding of the role of political communication in the success of village head elections, while also addressing research gaps that have yet to be thoroughly examined in the study of political communication at the village level.

The re-election of a village head for a second term is exemplified by the victory of the Village Head of Sugihrejo in Gabus District, Pati Regency, Central Java Province. The 2019 simultaneous village elections involved 122 out of 406 villages or urban wards across 21 districts in Pati Regency (Redaksi ClakClik, 2019). In this election, Tri Setyanto was re-elected as the Village Head of Sugihrejo for a second term. According to

the results of the third phase of the 2019 simultaneous elections held on December 21, 2019, Tri Setyanto secured 64% of the vote, surpassing his opponent and earning a new term from 2020 to 2026.

Table 1.

Recapitulation of Vote Counting Results for the 2019 Sugihrejo Village Head Election in Gabus Subdistrict, Pati Regency

Candidate Number for Village Head	Name of the Village Chief Candidate	Total Valid Votes Cast = 2.324	
		Valid Votes	Percentage
1	Suharto	824	36 %
2	Tri Setyanto	1.500	64 %

Source: Compiled from data provided by the Sugihrejo Village Head Election Committee in 2019

Based on the data presented above, it can be concluded that Tri Setyanto's victories in both his first candidacy in 2014 and his second term in 2019 reflect the strong support and high level of loyalty he received from the majority of Sugihrejo villagers. His leadership, marked by effective and skillful communication, contributed significantly to the village's development during his first term. This indicates that the political communication strategies employed by Tri Setyanto successfully gained public sympathy, ultimately playing a crucial role in securing his victory in the 2019 Sugihrejo village head election.

1.3 Previous Studies

This study also presents a review of previous research relevant to the subject matter in order to strengthen the theoretical foundation and serve as a supporting reference. Five prior studies are examined, each sharing similar research variables with this study, while also highlighting differences in approach and focus. The first study, conducted by Rani (2015), shares a common theme namely, the influence of political communication as a core research variable. However, a key difference lies in the additional variable involving voters from the student demographic, whereas the current study focuses on the electoral success of a candidate in a village head election. Furthermore, Rani's research employed a mixed-method approach, while this study adopts a purely quantitative method. The second study by Amelianti (2021) also addresses political communication as its main topic. Notably, both studies use the same theoretical framework empathy and homophily in political communication. The difference, however, lies in the research method: Amelianti used a qualitative approach, whereas the current study applies a quantitative approach.

The third study, conducted by Ridwan et al. (2022) and titled "*Empathy and Homophily Political Communication of Ganjar Pranowo*", shares a common topic with this research, focusing on political communication. It also employs the same theoretical framework, namely the empathy and homophily approach in political communication. However, the methodological difference is notable—Ridwan et al. used a qualitative approach, while this study applies a quantitative method. The fourth study by Damayanti (2024), titled "*Political Communication of Elected Village Heads in the Village Head Election in Kertasada Village, Kalianget Sub-district, Sumenep Regency*", also aligns with this research in terms of the studied variable—political communication—and the object of study, which is village heads elected through a local election. Nonetheless, the key distinction lies in the research method: Damayanti used a qualitative approach, whereas this study utilizes a quantitative method. The fifth study, conducted by Lisa (2024), also examines the political communication of village heads in the context of local elections. While the topic aligns closely with this study, the methodological approach differs. Lisa's research applies a qualitative method, in contrast to the quantitative approach used in this study.

1.4 State of the Art

Based on previous studies, there are several interconnected components that align with this research, particularly in relation to the themes of democratic election victories and political communication. These

connections are evident in this study's focus on political communication within the context of the 2019 Village Head Election in Sugihrejo Village, Gabus District, Pati Regency. This research specifically highlights Tri Setyanto, a figure recognized for his strong communication skills with his constituents and his ability to demonstrate empathy and compassion in his efforts to develop and improve the village. The 2019 election marked Tri Setyanto's second candidacy, in which he was successfully re-elected as village head. The author's interest in examining this case stems from Tri Setyanto's successful application of political communication during his first term in office, which led to significant progress in Sugihrejo Village. His effective communication is believed to have played a critical role in garnering public support, ultimately contributing to his victory in the second election period.

1.5 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine whether political communication influenced Tri Setyanto's victory in the village head election in Sugihrejo, Gabus District, Pati Regency, and to assess the extent of that influence on his electoral success.

II. METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative approach with a correlational research design, employing statistical techniques to test the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The selection of a correlational design is methodologically justified because the study seeks to empirically examine the magnitude and direction of the relationship between empathetic and homophilic political communication and electoral victory, without manipulating the research variables. This approach allows for objective measurement, hypothesis testing, and generalization within the defined population.

The research population was derived from the Permanent Voters List (Daftar Pemilih Tetap/DPT) of the 2019 Sugihrejo Village Head Election. A sample of 100 respondents was selected on the basis that registered voters constitute the most relevant unit of analysis, as they were directly involved in the electoral process and possess firsthand experience of political communication during the election period.

Data were collected using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire consisting of 25 items representing the operational definitions of the research variables. The instrument was constructed using a Likert Summated Rating Scale, enabling the quantification of respondents' attitudes, perceptions, and evaluations of political communication practices and electoral outcomes. The use of a Likert scale was deemed appropriate as it facilitates reliability, statistical comparability, and consistency in measuring latent social constructs.

For analytical purposes, the independent variable (X) was operationalized through indicators of empathetic and homophilic political communication, as conceptualized by Rogers and Shoemaker in *Communication of Innovations: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (1971). The dependent variable (Y), electoral victory within a democratic process, was operationalized based on the theoretical framework proposed by Goran Hyden in *Governance and Politics in Africa* (1992). These theoretical foundations were employed to ensure conceptual validity and to align the measurement indicators with established scholarly perspectives.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study employs a correlational method aimed at examining the extent to which the political communication conducted by Village Head Tri Setyanto influenced his victory in the Village Head Election of Sugihrejo, Gabus District, Pati Regency, Central Java Province.

3.1 The Influence of Political Communication on Tri Setyanto's Victory in the Village Head Election in Gabus Subdistrict, Pati Regency, Central Java Province

The research findings indicate that the political communication conducted by Village Head Tri Setyanto had a significant influence on his electoral victory in the Sugihrejo Village Head Election, located in Gabus District, Pati Regency. This conclusion is supported by the results of a simple linear regression analysis, where the calculated *t*-value (16.357) exceeds the critical *t*-table value (1.290), confirming a significant relationship between political communication and Tri Setyanto's success in the democratic contest. Furthermore, the

Spearman's Rank correlation test also revealed a strong positive correlation between political communication and Tri Setyanto's electoral victory.

The simple linear regression analysis applied to eleven indicators of the village head's political communication variable (X), which spans seven dimensions, revealed that all indicators had a comparable influence on the six indicators across three dimensions of the electoral victory variable (Y). This indicates that every indicator had a significant effect. The fact is supported by the calculated *t*-value being greater than the *t*-table value, confirming the significance of the influence.

Furthermore, based on the partial test results (*t*-test) presented in Table 4.14, the political communication variable of the village head (X) showed a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the village head's political communication has a significant influence on the electoral victory variable (Y). Therefore, the hypothesis that political communication of the village head affects electoral success is accepted. These findings support the notion that the better a candidate's political communication skills, the greater their chances of winning in an election, particularly in terms of gaining trust and support from voters, such as the community of Sugihrejo Village.

This study reveals that effective, participatory, and emotionally driven political communication plays a crucial role in winning village head elections. Tri Setyanto serves as a concrete example of how communication based on empathy and homophily can create a positive public image, foster voter loyalty, and gain broad community support. These findings reinforce the notion that political communication strategies are not merely about conveying political messages, but about building psychological and emotional connections with the community an essential element in securing victory in democratic village-level elections.

3.2 The Extent of the Influence of Political Communication on Tri Setyanto's Victory in the Village Head Election in Gabus District, Pati Regency, Central Java Province

In the political communication variable (X), there are 7 dimensions and 11 indicators which were tested using simple linear regression. The results indicate that all 11 indicators have an equally significant influence on the 6 indicators from the 3 dimensions of the variable on democratic election victory (Y), as evidenced by the regression test results showing that the value of t_{count} is greater than t_{table} . Furthermore, based on the results of the partial test (*t*-test) presented in Table 4.14, the significance value for the political communication variable (X) is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This demonstrates that the political communication variable has a significant effect on the electoral victory of Tri Setyanto in the democratic election (Y).

The results of this study indicate that effective political communication conducted by Village Head Tri Setyanto can increase the likelihood of a candidate's victory in the Sugihrejo Village Head Election. The correlation test revealed a significant positive relationship between political communication and the election victory of Tri Setyanto ($r = 0.732$, $p < 0.05$). Based on the coefficient of determination (R Square) test shown in Table 4.17, the R Square value is 0.732 or 73.2%. This indicates that the electoral victory of the candidate in the democratic contest (Y) can be influenced by 73.2% through the independent variable, namely the political communication (X) conducted by Village Head Tri Setyanto. The high coefficient of determination shows that the regression model built using the political communication variable successfully explains the variation in the electoral victory variable, thus the model can be considered strong in capturing the relationship between the two variables.

To determine which indicator has the most dominant influence on the dependent variable (Y), the Standardized Coefficients Beta test was used. The dominant influence of the independent variable indicators on the dependent variable is identified by observing the highest Beta value. The higher the Beta value, the greater the influence that particular indicator has on the dependent variable (Y).

Table 3.2
Standardized Coefficients *Beta* Test Results

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	.638	1.831		.348	.729
Modul 1	X1.1	.697	.338	.033	2.060	.043
	X1.2	.555	.425	.027	1.306	.195
	X1.3	1.127	.322	.067	3.504	.001
	X2.1	3.553	.370	.174	9.601	.000
	X2.2.1	1.292	.293	.073	4.407	.000
	X2.2.2	.724	.318	.039	2.274	.026
	X3.1	2.035	.344	.117	5.914	.000
	X3.2.1	1.725	.344	.095	5.014	.000
	X3.2.2	1.867	.332	.108	5.627	.000
	X4.1.1	.805	.365	.046	2.208	.030
	X4.1.2	2.468	.335	.121	7.367	.000
	X5.1.1	2.740	.319	.145	8.589	.000
	X5.1.2	2.345	.417	.103	5.628	.000
	X6.1.1	2.316	.380	.113	6.091	.000
	X6.1.2	3.299	.327	.183	10.076	.000
	X6.1.3	1.276	.287	.073	4.453	.000
	X7.1.1	1.725	.344	.095	5.014	.000
	X7.1.2	1.777	.382		5.627	.000
	X7.1.3	2.453	.370	.164	9.801	.000

Source: Study's Data, 2025

Based on the data presented in the table, indicator X 2.1, which represents 'concern' within the Emotional Empathy dimension, has the most dominant influence on the dependent variable (Y), with a Beta coefficient value of 3.553. Meanwhile, the indicator with a moderate level of influence is X7.1, referring to similarity in social status or social networks, with a Beta coefficient of 1.777. On the other hand, the indicator with the least impact is X1.2, which reflects emotional feeling under the Cognitive Empathy dimension, with a Beta coefficient of only 0.555. In light of these findings, it is recommended that future village head candidates work on enhancing their ability to express emotional feelings effectively, as this could play a crucial role in gaining public trust and electoral support.

The most dominant political communication indicator influencing electoral victory is empathy, particularly within its emotional and communicative dimensions. This is supported by the results of the

Standardized Coefficients Beta test, which indicate that empathy holds the highest impact on the dependent variable. Tri Setyanto successfully established emotional closeness with the community through a people-oriented leadership style, transparent information sharing, and active participation in community social events.

Public support for Tri Setyanto was also reinforced by his active use of social media as a tool for political communication. Through platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, he openly conveyed his vision, mission, and village development programs. This approach fostered a sense of transparency and demonstrated his active engagement in village development, which significantly increased public trust. As a result, it contributed to his victory in the 2019 village head election, where he secured 64% of the votes, far surpassing his opponent.

3.3 Main Findings Discussion

In the context of the Village Head Election in Sugihrejo, Gabus Subdistrict, Pati Regency, this study reveals that the success of a leader is often influenced by their prior leadership track record. By examining the extent to which Tri Setyanto's political communication contributed to his victory in his second term candidacy, the research found that political communication played a significant role in his electoral success. The results from the simple linear regression test and the Spearman Rank correlation consistently indicate a strong and significant positive relationship between political communication and election victory, with a correlation coefficient of 0.856 and an R Square value of 0.732. This means that 73.2% of the variation in electoral success can be explained by the effectiveness of the political communication conducted by Tri Setyanto.

These findings reaffirm that transparent, responsive, and inclusive political communication plays a crucial role in fostering public trust and gaining broad community support, thereby increasing the likelihood of winning an election. This highlights the importance of a village head's ability to communicate effectively, as it strongly correlates with their success in building trust, securing support, and ultimately achieving electoral victory. Furthermore, leadership history serves as a key benchmark for communities in assessing a candidate's capacity and potential to lead and bring about positive change in the village. Therefore, strong political communication skills are a vital asset for village heads to convince voters that they are the right choice to lead the village toward meaningful progress.

Moreover, the findings of this study are reinforced by previous research, such as that conducted by Nanda Pratiwi (2018) and Ahmad Hanif Muttaqin (2024), which similarly demonstrate that effective political communication plays a critical role in the success of local leaders across various regions. Therefore, this study is not only relevant within the local context of Sugihrejo Village but also contributes both theoretically and practically to a broader understanding of the importance of political communication in strengthening the legitimacy and success of leadership within local democratic systems.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the author's study of the influence of political communication on Tri Setyanto's success in the democratic election in Sugihrejo Village, Gabus District, Pati Regency, through questionnaire management, field observations, and simple correlation and regression analysis obtained during research at the Sugihrejo Village Head's Office, the author can conclude the following: This study reveals that the effective political communication carried out by Village Head Tri Setyanto significantly contributed to his re-election during the Sugihrejo Village Head Election. His victory in the second candidacy period in Gabus District was strongly influenced by the political communication strategies he implemented. This is evidenced by the results of a simple linear regression test, which shows a significant relationship between Tri Setyanto's political communication and his electoral success, as indicated by a *t* value (16.357) that is much higher than the *t* table value (1.290); Based on the results of the coefficient of determination test, the R Square value of 0.732 indicates that variable X—Tri Setyanto's political communication—has a 73.2% influence on variable Y, namely electoral victory. Furthermore, the results of the standardized coefficients beta test indicate that the "care" indicator of a political candidate is the most dominant factor influencing success in a democratic electoral contest.

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