



# Political Communication Strategy of Candidate Figures in Forming Relationship Patterns with Political Parties and Constituents in the Regional Head Election Contest in Makassar City

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## Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the political communication strategies used by candidate figures in building relationship patterns with political parties and constituents in the regional head election contest in Makassar City. The main focus of this study is to understand how regional head candidates design and implement their communication strategies to obtain optimal political support. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, which involves in-depth interviews, document analysis, and observation of political communication activities carried out by candidate figures. The results of the study indicate that the political communication strategies of candidate figures involve three main aspects: communication with political parties, communication with constituents, and the use of media as a means of strengthening the image. In communicating with political parties, candidate figures build relationships based on negotiation of interests and consolidation of visions and missions to obtain structural support. Meanwhile, in establishing communication with constituents, they use a personal and digital approach by utilizing social media and face-to-face activities to increase electability. In addition, the use of mass media and digital media is the main strategy in building an image and influencing public opinion.*

**Keywords:** Communication, Politics, Candidate Figures, Relations, Makassar

## Introduction

Regional head elections (Pilkada) are a political arena that brings together various interests, both from regional head candidates, political parties, and constituents. In the Pilkada contest, political communication strategies are a key factor for candidate figures in building an image, gaining support, and winning the election. Makassar City as one of the metropolitan cities in Indonesia has complex political dynamics, with the presence of various political actors, parties,



and heterogeneous constituent bases. Therefore, the political communication strategy used by candidate figures in building relationships with political parties and constituents is an important element that determines their success in the Pilkada.

In the context of local politics, the relationship between candidate figures and political parties is often not only limited to electoral support, but also reflects long-term strategic interests. Candidate figures need to develop effective communication with political parties in order to obtain structural and institutional support, both in the form of party recommendations and campaign resources. On the other hand, political communication with constituents is a challenge in itself, considering the differences in social, cultural, and economic characteristics of the people of Makassar City. Candidate figures must be able to convey political messages that are in accordance with the needs and aspirations of the community, while also building emotional closeness to increase electability.

In addition, the development of technology and social media has also changed the pattern of political communication in the Pilkada. Candidate figures now do not only rely on conventional campaigns, such as face-to-face meetings and advertisements in the mass media, but also utilize digital media to reach voters more widely and interactively. The right political communication strategy can help candidate figures in shaping public perception, managing opinions, and responding to political dynamics that develop during the election process.

In the regional head election contest in Makassar City, there are various phenomena that indicate challenges in the political communication strategies of candidate figures, especially in forming patterns of relations with political parties and constituents. One of the problems that often arises is the dynamics of coalitions and political party support for candidate figures. Makassar City as a political center in South Sulawesi has a political history that is colored by tight competition between candidate figures and dynamic negotiations between political parties in determining support. Not infrequently, candidate figures who initially received support from certain parties experience changes in coalition due to political pragmatism factors, the interests of party elites, or electoral calculations that continue to develop.

Another phenomenon that shows a problem in political communication strategies is the ineffectiveness of candidate figures in establishing closeness with constituents. Some candidates still rely on an elitist and formal communication approach, making it difficult to reach a wide voter base. In some cases, political campaigns are still focused on mass mobilization through a transactional approach, such as providing social assistance or money politics, rather than building communication based on clear programs and visions. As a result, people often act pragmatically in choosing leaders, not based on leadership quality and work programs, but because of emotional closeness or direct benefits obtained during the campaign.

In addition, the development of digital technology and social media has changed the landscape of political communication, but many candidates have not been able to utilize digital media effectively. Digital campaigns should be a tool to build closer interactions with voters, but in practice, many candidates only use social media as a means of one-way promotion, not as an interactive communication medium. Several cases also show that the uncontrolled spread of information, such as hoaxes and black campaigns, further complicates the political communication strategies of candidate figures. Lack of good communication management on social media can cause the candidate's political image to be bad in the eyes of the public.

Another challenge is the social and cultural diversity of the people of Makassar City, which requires candidate figures to adjust their communication strategies to local characteristics. Makassar City is known to have communities with diverse ethnic backgrounds and interest groups, so an effective communication approach must be able to embrace various elements of



society without causing sharp political polarization. Unfortunately, in several previous Pilkada, the phenomenon of identity politics emerged which was used as a strategy to gain support from certain groups, which risks causing social tension in society.

The above phenomena show that the political communication strategy of candidate figures in building relations with political parties and constituents in Makassar City still faces various challenges. Therefore, a more in-depth study is needed on how candidate figures can develop more effective communication strategies, both in building political party support and in attracting constituent sympathy in a more substantial and sustainable manner.

### Research Methodology

The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method, with the research paradigm used, namely Post Positivist. Qualitative research methods are approaches that focus on understanding the social and cultural context, as well as the experiences of the subjects studied. This method aims to explore meaning and understand phenomena holistically, by paying special attention to individual or group perspectives. The location of the research was carried out in Makassar City, while the focus of the research was the Political Communication Strategy of Candidate Figures. The data sources used in this study are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is taken through in-depth direct interviews, field notes, observation notes, or written materials obtained through direct interaction between researchers and participants. While secondary data is data obtained through literature *reviews*, various documents needed, or research results that are relevant and related to the research, such as journals, books, or electronic archives containing data relevant to the research topic. The first data collection technique used in this study is observation. Observations were carried out on several media that had published news about figures who participated in the regional head election contest in Makassar City in 2020. The second technique is in-depth interviews *with* several informants who are considered worthy and know information related to the social construction of mass media, and the last data collection technique is documentation, namely by collecting information through electronic archives in the mass media, related to news about figures of regional head candidates in Makassar City in 2020. The data obtained were analyzed inductively. The collected data were analyzed by looking for patterns, themes, and meanings that emerged naturally, which were related to the political communication strategies of figures in forming relational patterns in the regional head election contestation in Makassar City in 2020. The researcher used a flexible and reflective approach to interpret and provide rich explanations of the data collected. The results of this analysis are in the form of in-depth descriptions, theories developed based on data, or holistic descriptions of the phenomena studied. Furthermore, the last process is drawing conclusions.

### Analysis and Result

Political communication strategies in building a pattern of relations between political parties, candidate figures, and constituents are the foundation of the democratic process that takes place in a country. In this context, political communication becomes a tool in conveying messages, building images, and establishing relationships between political actors and their voters or constituents. In every political system, the relationship between political parties, candidate figures, and constituents greatly determines the success of a political campaign and constituent support.

Political communication strategy in the context of the 2020 regional head elections in Makassar City, is an instrument in building an effective relationship pattern between political parties, candidate figures, and constituents. Political parties and candidate figures, segment constituents based on demographics, geography, and political interests. They then target messages and



campaigns that are tailored to the needs and preferences of the segment.

Political parties and candidate figures use various communication methods, including direct campaigns, social media, and public meetings. They seek to convey messages that are relevant to the needs and aspirations of their constituents, and to build a positive image for themselves and the political party they represent. Effective communication helps to strengthen the relationship between political parties, candidate figures, and constituents, and increases support and participation in elections (Rosidi, 2017).

Therefore, related to the political communication strategy in building a relationship pattern, this study has succeeded in revealing five new and interesting facts to study, namely First, the existence of symbolic politics. Second, Popularity of Figures, Third, Political Rhetoric, and Fourth, Use of mass media.

### **Symbolic Politics**

Symbolic politics in the 2020 Pilkada in Makassar City, highlights how candidates and political parties use certain symbols, images, and narratives to influence public perceptions and emotions. In this political contestation, factors such as closeness to national figures, affiliation with certain political parties, and the use of attractive slogans, are dominant strategies used to shape constituent support. Campaigns carried out by candidates often focus on dramatic political promises and personal images that create positive perceptions, while concrete policy issues are often sidelined (Piscopo & Clark Muntean, 2018).

Political symbols, in Foucault's perspective, become part of the production of knowledge and truth that is recognized in a particular social order. By utilizing these symbols, political actors control the discourse circulating in society, shape public opinion, and influence constituents' political choices. This process creates a power relationship in which society is influenced to support certain candidates based on the symbolic narratives that have been constructed. These symbols strengthen the power positions of the candidates, making them figures who are recognized and accepted in the local political context (Cahyono, 2020).

Foucault views that power is not absolute, but rather distributed and works through various social mechanisms, including through symbolic politics. Political campaigns that rely on symbols, images, and narratives can be seen as an attempt to control discursive space, where people's choices are shaped by symbols produced by political actors. Thus, symbolic politics in the Makassar Pilkada is not only about candidate competition, but also about how power works symbolically to shape socio-political realities that influence voters' decisions.

In the 2020 Pilkada in Makassar City, symbolism played an important role in influencing public perception and support for candidates. Symbols such as self-identity, slogans, and other attributes were used intensively to build a positive image and increase identification with the candidate figure. The symbols used by each candidate pair were interpreted by constituents in different ways, depending on their cultural, social, and political backgrounds. The 2020 Makassar City Pilkada showed intense symbolic competition between competing candidate figures.

The use of symbols in the 2020 Pilkada contestation in Makassar City, is used to strengthen the emotional attachment between candidate pairs and constituents, as well as to mobilize the masses through messages that are easily understood and resonated by various community groups. Through this symbolic political strategy, candidate figures try to create a positive image and increase their appeal in the eyes of constituents, which can ultimately influence the final results of the political contestation. The symbolic political process can be seen in the following image:

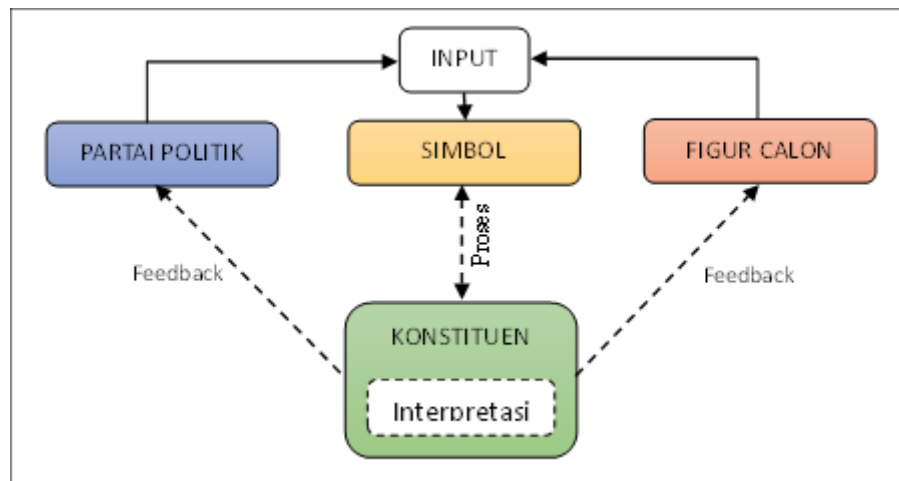


Figure 1. Symbolic Political Process

Source: 2024 Research Data Processing Results

### Popularity of Figures

The popularity of the candidate figure is used as one of the strategies, especially in the context of political communication used to build a pattern of relations with political parties and constituents. In this context, popularity refers to the level of recognition, support, and interest that a candidate figure has among the masses. The popularity of the candidate figure plays a role in strengthening relations with political parties. Popular figures tend to have the ability to attract the attention of political parties, who will see them as valuable assets in winning elections. Support from these political parties will provide access to figures to political resources, including campaign funds, organizational infrastructure, and organized voter support (Sobari, 2022).

The 2020 regional head elections in Makassar City have become a public spotlight with the emergence of a number of figures competing for the leadership seat of Makassar City. In the midst of local political dynamics, the popularity of candidate figures is one of the determining factors in attracting public support and attention. Candidate figures who achieve high popularity tend to have a number of prominent characteristics. They are figures who have long been known in local political circles and even have striking achievements in various fields, be it politics, business, or social. In addition, their success in building a positive image in the eyes of the public through creative and effective campaigns also contributes greatly to the popularity they enjoy (Cahyono, 2020).

The popularity of candidates is not always a guarantee of absolute victory. Complex local political dynamics, shifting constituent preferences, and opponents' campaign strategies can suddenly change the direction of support. Therefore, although popularity plays an important role in political contestation, track records, integrity, and the ability to overcome the challenges faced by Makassar City are also considerations for constituents in determining their political attitudes and choices (Utomo, 2016).

In the 2020 regional head election contest in Makassar City, the popularity of candidate figures has become increasingly interesting along with the development of the campaign and shifts in political dynamics. Candidate figures who have succeeded in maintaining or even increasing their popularity tend to have adaptive and responsive campaign strategies to changes in the needs and expectations of the community. Intensive campaign activities, both directly and





through social media, are the main means for candidates to expand their reach and increase their visibility in the eyes of their constituents. The presentation of superior programs accompanied by a strong narrative and convincing delivery is an effective strategy in maintaining popularity and winning constituent support (Arianto, 2017).

In addition, external factors such as developing political and social issues, as well as the role of the mass media in publishing news and opinions related to regional head election contests, also influence the popularity of candidate figures. Candidate figures who are able to respond quickly and effectively to these issues tend to have an advantage in maintaining their popularity amidst increasingly tight competition (Cahyono, 2020).

Ultimately, the popularity of candidate figures in the 2020 regional head election contest in Makassar City reflects a number of complex factors, including track record, public image, credibility, and the ability to communicate and interact with the community effectively. Although popularity can provide an initial advantage, in the dynamic political arena, success in winning constituent support and winning the leadership seat of Makassar City requires a comprehensive strategy, hard work, and high adaptability.

The popularity of the candidate's figure greatly influences building a pattern of relations with constituents. Broad support from constituents will increase the legitimacy and trust in the candidate. Through effective political communication, a popular candidate figure is able to establish close relationships with constituents, understand their needs and aspirations, and offer relevant solutions to various issues faced by the people of Makassar City. Thus, the popularity of the candidate figure helps build a strong pattern of relations between the candidate and his constituents, which will ultimately have a positive impact on the election results (Pradana, 2019).

In the context of the 2020 regional head elections in Makassar City, the popularity of candidate figures as a political communication strategy, which is an instrument in building a pattern of relations with political parties and constituents, can be examined through the framework of Michel Foucault's power relations theory. Michel Foucault proposed that power is not only repressive, but also productive and spread across various social relations. In a political context, the popularity of a candidate figure becomes a form of power that results from complex interactions between the figure and political parties and constituents (Dean, 2014).

Political communication strategies that emphasize the popularity of candidate figures are an effort to create and strengthen power relations between candidates and political parties and constituents. Popular candidates tend to have the ability to mobilize political support, both from political parties and from their constituent masses. In regional head election contests, the popularity of candidate figures will affect the dynamics of the relationship between political parties and constituents. Political parties tend to support popular candidates because this can increase their chances of winning the election. On the other hand, constituents who feel connected to popular candidate figures are more likely to provide their political support to the candidate (Pradana, 2019).

However, in Foucault's perspective, the popularity of candidates becomes an instrument of power that can be manipulated and controlled by various parties. Political parties, for example, will use the popularity of candidates as a tool to strengthen their dominance over constituents, while constituents will use the popularity of candidates to pressure or influence political party policies. Through the lens of Michel Foucault's power relations theory in understanding how control and influence over political narratives can shape local political dynamics. Foucault emphasizes the importance of analyzing the role of institutions and practices of power in the formation of political discourse. In this case, the popularity of candidate figures is seen as the



result of political narratives built by political parties and the mass media, which then influence constituents' perceptions and identification of the candidate.

By using the power of the media and political narratives, political parties can manipulate public opinion and strengthen their position in political competition. (Burhani et al., 2019). Foucault highlights the importance of understanding the hidden and invisible practices of power in society. In this case, the popularity of candidates can be influenced by various factors that are not always clearly visible, such as economic power, political connections, or clever campaign strategies. Knowledge of these hidden practices of power will provide an understanding of political dynamics, and how certain forces can manipulate the popularity of candidate figures for their own interests.

In the 2020 regional head elections in Makassar City, the popularity of candidate figures not only reflects the relationship between candidate figures, political parties, and constituents, but also shows a number of power relations that emerge at the regional level. Popular candidate figures can become the focal point for various political, economic, and social interests at the regional level. The use of candidate popularity as a tool for political communication also shows how power is produced, maintained, and exercised in local spaces. In this context, regional head elections are not only a formal political process, but also an arena where various local actors compete to control and influence the direction of policy and development in Makassar City.

Through Foucault's perspective, the popularity of candidate figures can be seen in the power produced and reproduced through various communication practices, negotiations, and political strategies. Here, the popularity of candidates becomes a symbol of the dynamics of power that continues to move and is formed in the interaction between various political and social interests at the regional level. In addition, Foucault's theory of power relations views the popularity of candidates not only as a reflection of domination or control, but also resistance and opposition from various actors at the regional level. (Dean, 2014).

In addition to Michel Foucault's power relations theory, the popularity of candidate figures as a political communication strategy in building relationship patterns with political parties and constituents in the 2020 regional head election contest in Makassar City can also be studied through Max Weber's theory of social action. According to Weber's theory, individuals act rationally when they choose actions that are considered to provide the best results according to their goals. However, in the perspective of Weber's theory, it emphasizes that rational actions can produce results that are not always desired or rational in the long term. In a political context, the popularity of candidate figures can be understood as one of the factors that influences the rational actions of constituents and political parties. (Palonen, 2019).

Candidate figures who have high popularity tend to gain more support from political parties and constituents. This is due to the perception that the figure has the ability to win elections and represent their interests well. Thus, political parties tend to build relationships with popular candidate figures to strengthen their position in political contestation.

### **Political Rhetoric**

Political rhetoric is the art and science of using words in a persuasive way and influencing public opinion and actions. In the context of political communication strategies, political rhetoric becomes a tool for candidate figures to build strong relationship patterns with political parties and constituents. As a political communication strategy, political rhetoric plays a very important role in shaping public perception of the policies, values, and political vision of a party or candidate figure. By using the right rhetoric, candidate figures will influence public opinion, strengthen political support, and build close relationships with political parties and their



constituents. (Mozefani et al., 2020).

Political parties use political rhetoric to strengthen internal solidarity, unite party members in achieving a common vision and goals, and mobilize party support for certain political interests. Candidate figures use rhetoric that inspires and unites political parties in facing existing political challenges. In addition, political rhetoric also plays a role in building patterns of relations with constituents or voters. By using compelling rhetoric, candidate figures can create emotional bonds with constituents, communicate campaign promises, and gain the political support needed to win elections.

However, political rhetoric can also backfire if it is not balanced with concrete actions and consistency in policy. Constituents tend to be skeptical of empty political rhetoric without real support from appropriate actions and policies. Therefore, candidate figures and political parties must use political rhetoric wisely and responsibly, and ensure that their political communication is supported by actions that are consistent and in accordance with the interests of constituents. (Sanjaya et al., 2018).

Political rhetoric, as the art or science of speaking persuasively, is an important tool in the context of regional head elections. Candidates use political rhetoric to convey their visions, programs, and political promises to potential voters. In the context of the 2020 Pilkada in Makassar City, candidate figures utilized various communication platforms, such as public speeches, debates, social media, and direct meetings with residents, to spread political messages.

The 2020 regional head elections in Makassar City have become a highly competitive political event, with several candidates vying for leadership positions. Amidst the tight competition, political rhetoric has become the main tool used by each candidate figure to influence constituents and gain support. The candidate figures use various communication strategies to build a positive image in the eyes of constituents. One of the main aspects of political rhetoric in this context is the use of narratives that highlight past achievements, future visions, and campaign promises. These candidate figures repeatedly emphasize their commitment to the development of Makassar City, both in terms of infrastructure, economy, and public services.

In addition, in their political rhetoric, figures or candidates prioritize issues that are relevant to the interests of the people of Makassar City, such as improving welfare, education, health, and environmental issues. In this context, candidate figures try to gain sympathy and support from constituents by offering concrete solutions to the problems faced by Makassar City. In addition to positive narratives, political rhetoric also includes attacks on political opponents. Candidates and campaign teams use various strategies to highlight the weaknesses or mistakes of opponents, both in terms of policy and personal track record. Negative campaigns like this are often aimed at damaging the opponent's image and strengthening the candidate's own position in the eyes of constituents.

In addition to conventional political rhetoric, campaigns in the digital era have also become an integral part of the 2020 regional head election contest in Makassar City. Candidate figures utilize social media and other digital platforms to reach voters directly, spread campaign messages, and mobilize support. In principle, political rhetoric in the 2020 regional head election contest in Makassar City reflects the complex dynamics of local politics, where each candidate tries to win the hearts and minds of constituents with various communication strategies they have.

In addition, political rhetoric in the 2020 regional head election contest in Makassar City also includes the use of political symbols that are specifically designed to stimulate local identity and citizen pride. Candidate figures often associate themselves with values and symbols that





are considered important by the people of Makassar, such as local culture, city history, and prominent figures.

The importance of political rhetoric is also reflected in the public appearance of candidate figures, where they strive to project an image of strong leadership, charisma, and credibility. (Mozefani et al., 2020). Through speeches, public debates, and direct interactions with constituents, candidate figures strive to convince the public that they are the right leaders to lead Makassar City in a better direction. In addition, political rhetoric in the 2020 regional head election contest in Makassar City also reflects the dynamics of political coalitions and strategic alliances between various political and non-political interests.

Candidate figures often build strong support networks among political parties, interest groups, and community leaders to expand their voter base and gain broader political support. However, political rhetoric in the context of the 2020 regional head elections in Makassar City also faces challenges, especially in terms of disseminating accurate and transparent information to constituents. In an era where disinformation and hoaxes can easily spread through social media and other digital platforms, candidates must be committed to conveying factual and honest messages to constituents. (Mozefani et al., 2020).

Political rhetoric in the context of the 2020 regional head elections in Makassar City, is used as a stage by candidate figures to win public support. In this case, Michel Foucault's theory of power relations provides an interesting perspective for understanding the political dynamics that occur. Foucault views power as something that is not only owned by individuals or institutions, but as something that is spread throughout the social network. In political contestation, power can be seen as an effort to control and influence public opinion and behavior. (Syafiuddin, 2018).

Candidate figures in the Makassar City regional head election use political rhetoric to build narratives about their self-image and the image of their political opponents, as well as the political agenda they are promoting. Candidate figures utilize various communication platforms, from direct campaigns to social media, to convey messages designed to gain support. In Foucault's view, political rhetoric is considered a tool to strengthen power relations. Candidates use carefully chosen language and symbols to create a political identity that appeals to constituents. Political parties and candidate figures use rhetoric to seduce and deceive the masses, directing their opinions and emotions according to political interests. (Dean, 2014).

In addition, in the Foucauldian context, political rhetoric is also seen as a way to form and maintain existing power structures. Candidate figures tend to exploit the weaknesses and dissatisfaction felt by the community towards the previous government or existing socio-political conditions to strengthen their identity claims as agents of needed change. However, Foucault's theory also shows that power is not static, but continues to change and shift. (Moon & Holling, 2015). In the context of regional head elections, this can be seen from the dynamics of changes in public opinion, shifts in political agendas, and strategies changed by candidates to remain relevant in political contestation.

In addition, in the 2020 regional head election contest in Makassar City, political rhetoric can also be seen as a tool to determine the agenda and form political identity. Candidate figures use language and narratives that are strategically designed to strengthen their political position in the eyes of constituents and to draw attention to certain issues. Within the framework of Foucault's power relations theory, political rhetoric is not only limited to what is said, but also how the message is delivered and received by the public. Candidate figures tend to use communication techniques that utilize mass media and social networks to spread political messages widely and strengthen their support base. (Sayer, 2012).



rhetoric also shapes political identity. Candidate figures often use rhetoric to build a desired self-image in the eyes of constituents. Candidate figures present themselves as authoritative leaders, or raise certain values that are considered important by potential voters. In the context of regional head elections, political rhetoric is also closely related to local issues that are relevant to the local community. Candidate figures tend to adjust their political messages and narratives to suit the needs and desires of constituents, such as economic, educational, infrastructure, or environmental issues. (Mozefani et al., 2020).

Thus, in the 2020 regional head elections in Makassar City, political rhetoric is understood as the complexity of local political dynamics and the relevance of theoretical approaches in understanding it. In this context, Michel Foucault's theory of power relations views how political rhetoric is not only a tool to win votes in regional head elections, but also as an integral part of the dynamics of power that take place in society. Through the framework of Michel Foucault's theory of power relations, it opens a window to see how power and knowledge are interrelated in everyday political practice, and how political rhetoric plays a role in the process. (Dean, 2014).

In addition to Michel Foucault's power relations theory framework, political rhetoric in the context of the 2020 regional head elections in Makassar City can also be studied through Max Weber's theory of social action. In this context, political rhetoric describes an important aspect of social action that is directed at political goals. Weber understands social action as individual behavior that has subjective meaning and is oriented towards certain goals. (Afandi, 2020). In this case, candidate figures use political rhetoric as a tool to achieve political goals, with the aim of winning elections and gaining political power.

Weber also highlighted the concept of authority that distinguishes three main types, namely traditional authority, rational-legal authority, and charismatic authority. (Palonen, 2019). Political rhetoric in the Makassar City regional head election is associated with charismatic authority, where candidate figures try to attract constituents with personal charm, strong leadership, and inspiring promises. Candidate figures try to convince constituents that they are the right leaders to lead Makassar City with charisma and an attractive vision.

However, in practice, political rhetoric also reflects other aspects of social action according to Weber, such as conflicts of interest between different social groups or classes. Candidate figures and campaign teams use political rhetoric to mobilize support from various segments of society by underlining issues that are relevant to each group. (Afandi, 2020). Through the lens of the concept of legitimacy in Max Weber's theory of social action, legitimacy refers to the acceptance or recognition given by society to the authority and power held by political leaders or institutions. Candidate figures in the 2020 regional head election contest in Makassar City, use political rhetoric to gain legitimacy for the targeted power.

Political parties and candidate figures, try to convince constituents to win the political battle. In this way, political rhetoric becomes a means to build legitimacy for the desired political power. Weber also distinguishes between rational action and emotional action. In political rhetoric, candidates use rational arguments to convince constituents of the superiority of their programs and policies. However, political parties and candidates also often exploit constituents' emotions, such as pride in local identity or anti-establishment sentiment, to gain support. (Palonen, 2019).

### **Use of Mass Media**

The use of mass media as a political communication strategy in building a pattern of relations with political parties and constituents is an important approach in the world of contemporary politics. Mass media, such as television, radio, newspapers, and online platforms, are the main



means for politicians to convey political messages to the wider community and build relationships with potential voters and political parties. In this context, political communication strategies through mass media involve various elements, including the use of measured and persuasive messages, the use of appropriate media platforms according to the target audience, and effective interaction with political parties and constituents. (Astari, 2021).

Politicians and candidate figures use mass media to strengthen their political image and identity. Through television interviews, opinion columns in newspapers, or content on social media, candidate figures try to build narratives that support the vision and mission of the political agenda they are promoting. By controlling this narrative, candidate figures will shape public perception of themselves and the political party they represent. (Ravary et al., 2019).

Mass media allows candidates to convey policies and programs to the wider public. They use live broadcasts, political advertisements, or articles to explain in detail what they plan to do if elected. This will build trust with constituents and strengthen the relationship between political parties and constituents. With various channels available, mass media allows candidates to reach constituents efficiently. They can convey political messages to a wide audience in a short time. By understanding the demographics and media preferences of constituents, candidates will choose the most effective platform to achieve their political communication goals. (Ritonga, 2017).

Mass media not only functions as a tool to convey political messages, but also as a forum to interact with constituents. Through live broadcasts, interactive events, or online forums, candidate figures can listen to input and concerns from constituents. This will strengthen the relationship between candidate figures and constituents, and give the impression that candidate figures care and are responsive to the needs of the community. In addition, when facing challenges or controversies, mass media can be a tool to manage and respond to the situation. By communicating openly through mass media, candidate figures can maintain support from political parties and constituents. (Ravary et al., 2019).

The use of mass media as a political communication strategy not only helps build a pattern of relations between political parties, candidate figures, and constituents, but also shapes the dynamics of politics as a whole. By utilizing mass media effectively, candidate figures can influence public opinion, mobilize support, and influence election results. In the context of tight political competition, the role of mass media backfires if not used wisely, because the political messages conveyed must be acceptable to various parties and not cause detrimental controversy. Therefore, a smart political communication strategy that adapts to the local context is very important to gain support in regional head elections. (Fermana & Zetra, 2022).

The importance of using mass media as a means of political communication cannot be underestimated, especially in the context of a competitive regional head election contest such as in Makassar City in 2020. Candidate figures who are able to master the mass media effectively will have an advantage in gaining political support and winning the election. However, the role of mass media in politics also raises issues related to information control and fairness in the election process, which need to be seriously considered by all parties involved.

In the midst of fierce competition, mass media often becomes a means to attack political opponents with distorted or exaggerated information, such as the use of negative narratives, embarrassing depictions, or emphasis on past mistakes. Such propaganda can influence public perception of candidates and affect election results. (Elva Retnawati, Irawan Suntoro, 2014) . However, the use of mass media in regional head election contests also provides an opportunity for constituents to access information and evaluate various views before making decisions. The people of Makassar have wide access to various sources of information, so media propaganda



must be balanced with criticism and a deep understanding of issues relevant to the leadership of Makassar City.

Mass media is also used as a propaganda tool by candidate figures and political parties. Media propaganda in the context of the 2020 Makassar regional head election has deepened political polarization and division in society. When mass media is used to attack political opponents with narratives that provoke and reinforce differences, this will trigger conflict and tension between groups. This shows the importance of maintaining healthy dialogue and prioritizing common interests over narrow political interests.

In an environment where political propaganda is widespread, media credibility becomes crucial. The public must be able to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of information. Independent, factual, and balanced reporting is essential to provide accurate insights to constituents because media propaganda can also affect voter turnout. When voters feel influenced or even pressured by aggressive political attacks or confusing narratives, they are more likely to withdraw from the electoral process. This can be detrimental to democracy, as low turnout will result in weak legitimacy for the elected government. (Utami, 2016).

The use of mass media in the 2020 regional head elections in Makassar City can be examined through the lens of Michel Foucault's power relations theory. Foucault views power as something that is spread throughout the social structure and is not limited to the government or certain individuals. (Syafiuddin, 2018). In this case, mass media becomes a powerful tool to hinder or strengthen existing power relations. In regional head elections, mass media has a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing public perception of candidate figures and relevant issues. Mass media is used by those in power to control political narratives and direct public attention to certain agendas.

Through Foucault's perspective, the use of mass media in the 2020 regional head election contest in Makassar City can be interpreted as an effort to strengthen or change existing power relations. For example, parties in power or with certain interests will use mass media to control information conveyed to the public, emphasize their achievements, or even hide weaknesses or controversies. The use of mass media in the 2020 regional head election contestation in Makassar City not only includes direct news reporting, but also more complex communication strategies such as political campaigns and the creation of political narratives. Within the framework of Foucault's power relations theory, mass media plays a role in strengthening or destroying existing power structures in the context of local politics. (Burhani et al., 2019).

The use of mass media in the context of the 2020 regional head elections in Makassar City can also be examined through the concept of biopower put forward by Foucault. Biopower refers to the power that regulates the human population as biological beings, regulates their lives and deaths, and controls the bodies and behavior of individuals in society. The use of mass media in political contestation can be a powerful instrument of biopower. The mass media not only influences public opinion about regional head candidates but also shapes narratives about society itself. In this way, the mass media can strengthen existing power structures by controlling collective knowledge and understanding of the identity, values, and aspirations of society (Nastain & Nugroho, 2022).

Mass media can also be used to strengthen political discipline among the people. Through critical or praising news, mass media can regulate the political behavior of individuals in society, influence participation in the election process, and even influence their perspective on democracy itself. However, Foucault also shows that within power there is always the potential for resistance and resistance. In the context of regional head elections, mass media becomes a tool to build solidarity among groups that are opposed to existing power, to voice their interests,



and to challenge the narratives issued by the authorities.

Through the theoretical framework of Foucault's power relations and biopower, the use of mass media in the 2020 regional head election contest in Makassar City can not only be understood as a tool to strengthen the dominance of the ruling government, but also as a battlefield where various interests and forces interact and conflict with each other. In addition, in the 2020 regional head election in Makassar City, the use of mass media can also be examined through the concept of "technology of the self" in Michel Foucault's thinking. Foucault stated that individuals in modern society continuously produce and are produced by technologies that influence their views of themselves and the world around them. (Charlier & Panait, 2018).

The mass media not only provides information about candidates and political issues, but also shapes the image and political identity of the candidates. Through the news, interviews, and opinions presented, the mass media helps shape the public's perception of who the candidates are and what they represent. (Berliani Ardha, 2014). Thus, the use of mass media in regional head election contests is not only a power struggle between various political interests, but also a process in which individuals in society continuously shape their own political identities. Society can adopt or reject the narratives presented by the mass media, but in the process they are also involved in the reconstruction of their own political identities and positions.

Political communication strategies used by political figures in building relationships with political parties and constituents involve various complementary approaches. Money becomes a major force in forming framing through mass media. Framing carried out through mass media includes symbolic aspects, popularity and various political rhetoric in perceiving constituents. Constituents in this case, receive and interpret the political messages received, and then provide feedback to the candidate figure or political party. The strategy process played by political figures can be seen in the following picture:

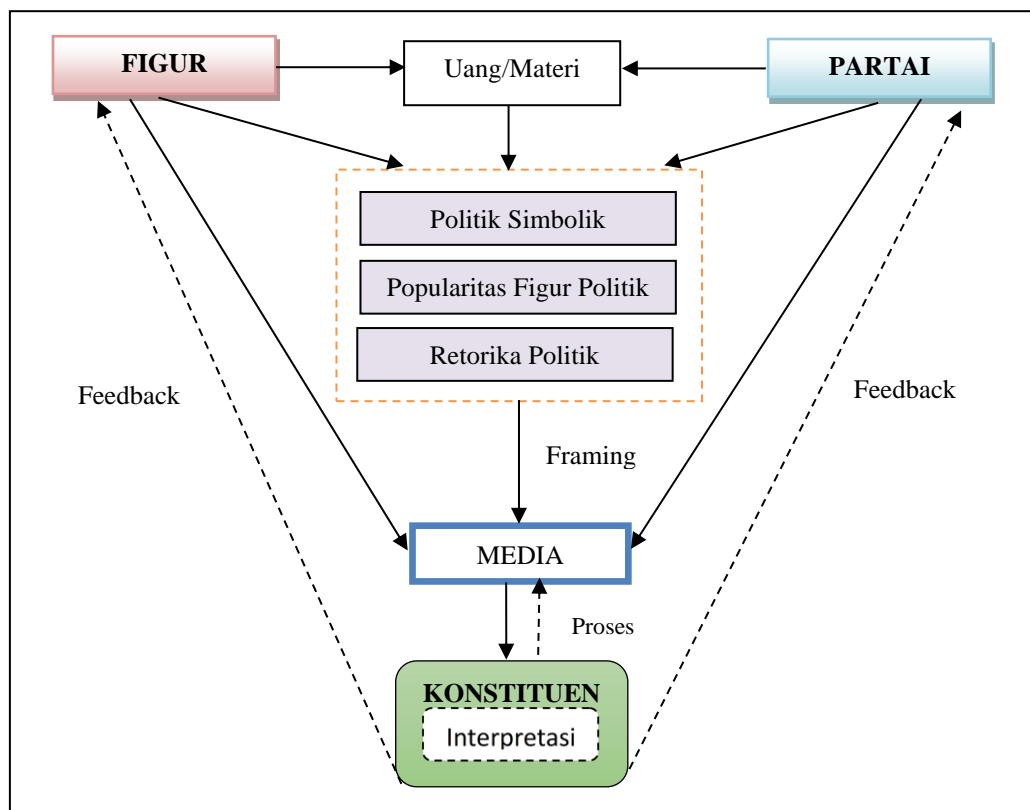


Figure 2. Political Communication Strategy of Figures in Forming Relationship Patterns





Source: Results of 2024 Research Data Processing

## Findings and Conclusion

The political communication strategy used by figures in building relations with political parties and constituents prioritizes symbolic politics and the use of money as the main tool in building relations, emphasizes increasing the popularity of political figures, the use of effective political rhetoric, and the use of mass media. The popularity of figures is an important aspect in attracting attention and support from political parties and constituents. Political rhetoric is used to form positive perceptions in the eyes of the public, while mass media is used as the main tool to spread messages and influence public opinion.

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