



## Da'wah Communication and Inclusive Campaign Strategies in the 2024 Semarang Mayoral Election

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### ABSTRACT

*Semarang is sociologically populated by a Muslim majority, but geopolitically, historically, it is known as a strong base for the nationalist group (PDIP). This unique contradiction demands that political actors formulate adaptive campaign strategies for the 2024 Semarang mayoral election. This study aims to analyze the winning strategies implemented by candidates to capture Muslim voters without negating the nationalist cultural identity of Semarang residents. This study aims to analyze the campaign methods and strategies that significantly influenced the victory in the 2024 local election in Semarang City. This research employs a qualitative approach with Semarang City as the research locus. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the victory of Agustina-Iswar was influenced by several key factors, including the strength of political party machinery, the candidate's personal figure and political charisma, support from volunteers and the community, direct engagement activities with the public such as market visits, group exercise activities, and visits to micro, small, and medium enterprises, outreach and relationship-building with Islamic religious leaders (kiai and ulama) in Semarang City, as well as pro-people policy programs, such as the provision of operational assistance amounting to IDR 25 million per neighborhood unit (RT) per year.*

**Keyword:** *Da'wah communication; inclusive campaign strategy; Semarang mayoral election.*

### INTRODUCTION

The 2024 regional head elections (Pilkada) are the first to be held simultaneously in Indonesia to elect governors and mayors/regents. 37 provinces will hold gubernatorial elections, 415 regencies will elect regents,

and 93 will elect mayors (Rizki, 2025). The 2024 Pilkada in Semarang City represents a significant milestone in local political dynamics, particularly as it takes place in an era of increasingly dynamic political communication patterns.

The Semarang mayoral election has been directly elected by the public since 2005. One measure of the success of the election is high voter turnout. The Semarang City election saw fluctuating turnout. Numerous efforts have been made by the local government and election organizers (the General Elections Commission (KPU), and the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) to increase voter turnout (Christine et al, 2021). Voter participation figures since 2005 can be seen as follows:

Table 1

Voter Participation Rates for the 2005-2024 Semarang City Regional Elections

Year	Candidate pair	Mayor and Deputy Mayor
2005	1) Sukawi Sutarif-Machfud Ali	Sukawi Sutarif-Machfud Ali (voter turnout 66%)
	2) Soediro Atmo Prawiro-Akhmad Musyafir	
	3) Bambang Raya-Siti Chomsiyati Sutrisno	
	4) Soendoro-R. Yuwanto	
2010	1) Mahfudz Ali-Anis Nugroho	Soemarmo-Hendrar Prihadi (voter turnout 60%)
	2) Harini Krisniati-Ari Purbono	
	3) Bambang Raya-Kristanto	
	4) M. Farchan-Dasih Ardiyantari	
	5) Soemarmo-Hendrar Prihadi	

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2015	1)Soemarmo-Zuber Safawi 2) Hendrar Prihadi; Hevearita gunaryati rahayu 3)Sigit Ibnugroho- Agus Sutyoso.	Hendrar Prihadi- gunaryanti (voter turnout 65%)
2020	Hendrar Prihadi- Hevearita Gunaryanti Rahayu	Hendrar Prihadi-Hevearita Gunaryanti Rahayu (voter turnout 68%)
2024	1)Agustina Wilujeng Pramestuti -Iswar Aminuddin 2) Yoyok Sukawi (Alamsyah Satyanegara Sukawijaya) – Joko Santoso	Agustina Wilujeng Pramestuti - Iswar Aminuddin (voter turnout 71,25%)

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Source: Semarang City Election Commission

The role of candidate pairs also influences voter turnout. The work programs offered by candidates during the campaign significantly influence public choice. Campaigns are understood not only to provide political education to the public but also to address existing societal issues (Setiawan, 2022).

Semarang City is the capital of Central Java province. Its population was 1,694,740 (as of 2023). According to BPS (BPS, 2024) Islam is the majority religion (84-88%) among Semarang residents. There are 1,485,169 Muslims; 83,960 Catholics; 115,684 Christians; 1,165 Hindus; 9,958 Buddhists; and 430 other religions.

The winners of the 2024 regional elections are Agustina Wilujeng Pramestuti and Iswar Aminuddin (Candidate Pair 01). Agustina is considered a symbol of the triple minority, being a Woman, Catholic, and of Chinese descent. Iswar Aminuddin is Muslim, non-partisan, and previously a bureaucrat (civil servant/Semarang City Secretary). Agustina and Iswar's victory demonstrates that Semarang residents are becoming more inclusive, less easily influenced by issues/provocations based on ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations. How can a minority mayoral candidate win the 2024 regional elections? What campaign strategies and methods will candidate pair 01 use?

This research is important to understand the strategy of candidate pair 01 to win the 2024 regional elections. It is also hoped that this research

will contribute to the development of a more ethical political campaign strategy that is responsive to voter dynamics at the local level.

This research has never been conducted before. There is a study titled "Understanding the Modern Election Campaign: Analysis of Campaign Eras Through Financial Transparency Disclosures at the 2019 UK General Election." Written by Katharine Dommet et al., "Modern election campaigns are supported by data" (Dommet et al, 2024). Furthermore, all parties allocate budgets for social media advertising. Other expenses include brochure production, merchandise, postal delivery, and opinion polls. What differentiates this research from the previous one (Dommet's research) is the 2019 British General Election.

Another study entitled *Inclusive Political Strategy: "Analysis of the Pram-Rano Pair in the 2024 Regional Election Contest"* (Apriliachani et al, 2024). The results of the study show that the mass media has an important role in disseminating the inclusive messages of the Pram-Rano pair, such as programs oriented to community needs, the elimination of social boundaries in the campaign, and political narratives that embrace diversity. The media platforms used: television, newspapers, social media are used to increase the popularity of the candidate pair. This strategy has proven effective, seen from the increase in the electability of the Pram-Rano pair who were initially behind to being able to win the regional election in one round.

The study, entitled "Analysis of Raffi Ahmad's Instagram Content in Supporting the Campaign of Regional Head Candidates in the 2024 Regional Elections," shows that Raffi Ahmad uses the Instagram account @rafinagita1717 to increase the candidate's visibility through a well-planned communication strategy, including the use of photos, videos, and emotional narratives that support the candidate's image (Irfan et al, 2024). Furthermore, audience engagement through interactions such as likes, comments, and shares demonstrates the effectiveness of the persuasive message conveyed. This study provides an understanding of the role of celebrities in political campaigns on social media, as well as their impact on public perception and voter engagement. The results of this study are able to contribute to the study of political communication, particularly the use of social media as a digital campaign tool in Indonesia.

In general, Semarang City has a unique characteristic: although the majority of its population is Muslim, its political culture has historically been identified with a strong nationalist base (the "red/red" political map

with a political base in the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) (Aji, Utomo, & Fitriyah, 2016). This contradiction or combination of sociological-religious (Muslim) and geopolitical (nationalist) is what makes this research interesting to examine.

This research uses a Theoretical Framework, including: *the first*, Campaign Theory (Slater, 1999). The following are the main theories and models often used as theoretical frameworks in developing or researching campaigns: a) Behavioral Change Theories. This theory focuses on how campaigns can change a person's habits or actions. b) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB): States that a person's behavior is determined by their intentions. These intentions are influenced by three factors: 1) Attitude (attitude toward the behavior), 2) Subjective Norms (social pressure or opinions of others), 3) Perceived Behavioral Control (self-confidence in one's ability to perform the action).

*The second*, Islamic Political Communication. Islamic Political Communication combines the basic principles of Islamic law (the Quran and Hadith) with contemporary theories of communication and political science (Jusuf, 2019). Its primary focus is not simply on how to attain power, but rather on how to manage power and convey political messages to achieve the welfare of the people (maslahat al-ammah) based on divine values. Islamic political communication is built on three main foundations that radically differentiate it from secular political communication (Walisyah, 2023: 1) Tawhid (Theocentric): The source of all authority and truth is Allah SWT. Political communication must be subject to divine rules. Political power is seen as a trust, not an absolute property right. 2) Risalah: The concept of prophecy as an ideal model. Prophet Muhammad SAW was a master political communicator who built the state of Medina through the Medina charter with inclusive, honest, and diplomatic communication. 3) Khilafah/Amanah: Humans are caliphs (leaders/managers) on earth. Political communication is used as a tool to carry out the mandate of leadership to create justice and prosperity.

*The third*, Muslim Political Choice. This study attempts to explain the factors that influence a Muslim in determining his political choice (party, candidate, or policy). These factors include: 1) a sociological approach that states that a person's social characteristics determine his political choice. This approach is divided into two, namely socioreligious and religious demographics. Socioreligious is influenced by Clifford Geertz's theory that divides society into santri and abangan. Santri tend to choose Islamic-based

parties or candidates (traditionalists to PKB/NU, while modernists to PAN/Muhammadiyah or PKS). Religious Demographics: Looking at how factors of social class, education level, and region (urban vs. rural) interact with their level of religiosity in determining their choice (Gelora, 2019). 2) Psychological Approach. This approach adapts the Michigan School Theory (Campbell, et al.) which emphasizes the emotional and psychological closeness of voters to political actors (Ocampo, 2018) . a) Religious-Based Party Identification: The extent to which a Muslim voter feels "part" of a particular Islamic party's identity. b) Religious Emotional Bond: The patron-client relationship between voters and religious figures (Kiai, Ustaz, Habib, or Tuan Guru). Muslim voters often use the figure's fatwa, appeal, or political choice as a cognitive shortcut (heuristic) to determine their choice.

## **METHODS**

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand in-depth how candidate pairs (especially the winning candidates) campaigned in the 2024 regional elections in Semarang City (Mulyadi, 2025). This approach was chosen to explore the meaning, strategies, and dynamics of political communication used by candidate pairs that cannot be explained quantitatively (Yarnis & Muksin, 2024). Qualitative research allows researchers to capture patterns of interaction, political messages, and public responses to campaigns that develop during the election period (Jihan, 2025).

The research location was focused on Semarang City. This was due to the ongoing campaign activities for the 2024 Pilkada. The primary data source in this study came from key informants, consisting of the campaign team. Informants were determined by selecting sources deemed to have the capacity, knowledge, and direct involvement in the candidate pair's campaign activities (Kiran, 2022). Informants included the Chairman of the DPR D of Semarang City (Head of the Winning Team) and Lo PDI Perjuangan.

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques. First, in-depth interviews to explore campaign strategies and the challenges faced by election participants (Rahayu et al., 2025). Second, documentation, in the form of secondary data collection, such as KPU regulations regarding campaigns, online media reports, and archives of regional head candidates' campaign content. Third, observation. Observations were conducted by

directly observing campaign activities and observing Agustin and Iswar's social media accounts throughout the campaign.

The collected data (Sururi, 2022) was then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis, which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the data reduction stage, researchers selected important information related to the campaign patterns and communication strategies proposed by the candidate pairs. The reduced data was then presented in narrative form and thematic categories to facilitate understanding of the relationships between variables (Samed, 2023). In the final stage, researchers drew conclusions regarding the effectiveness, campaign methods and strategies used by the candidate pairs.

To maintain data validity, this study uses source triangulation and method triangulation techniques (Carter, 2014). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from the campaign team and the KPU. Method triangulation, meanwhile, combined interviews and documentation to ensure more accurate and accountable data (Prakas, 2025). This methodology is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of how campaign methods and strategies influence victory in the 2024 regional elections in Semarang City.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the 2024 General Elections Regulation (PKPU) No. 2 concerning the program stages and schedule for the 2024 regional elections, the campaign period will last two months (September 25, to November 23, 2024). This is the shortest campaign compared to previous elections. The brevity of the campaign also contributes to a lively political atmosphere. Candidate pair 01, supported by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), secured the most seats, facing a coalition of all other parties.

Table 2

Semarang City Regional House of Representatives Seat Acquisition in the 2024 Election

No	Political parties	parliamentary seats
1	PDI Perjuangan	14
2	Gerindra	7

3	PKS	6
4	Demokrat	6
5	PKB	5
6	PSI	5
7	Golkar	4
8	PAN	1
9	PPP	1
10	Nasdem	1
Amount		50

Source: Semarang City Election Commission

The 2024 simultaneous regional elections will elect the governor and deputy governor of Central Java, as well as the mayor and deputy mayor of Semarang. The final voter list (DPT) for Semarang City for the 2024 regional elections totals 1,265,192 (613,751 men and 651,441 women). Voter turnout for the gubernatorial election is higher than for the mayoral election. This is due to the presence of voters who have moved from other regencies/cities within the province of Central Java. This can be seen as follows:

Table 3

Voters for the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections in Semarang City

	Mayoral election		Gubernatorial election	
Permanent Voter List:	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>1,265,192</b>	613,751	651,441	613,751	651,441
Voter Rights Users:	903,477		904,664	
	420,087	483,390	420,824	483,840
Percentage of Voters	903,477 x 100%		904,664x100%	
	1,265,192		1,265,192	
	=71,25%		= 71,35%	

Source: Semarang City Election Commission

The 2024 Semarang mayoral election featured two pairs of candidates. The following table shows the candidate pairs, their supporting parties, and the vote count:

Table 4

Supporting Political Parties

No	Supporting Political Parties	Vote acquisition
Agustina-Iswar	PDI Perjuangan	486.423 (57,24%)
Yoyok-Joss	Partai Demokrat, Gerindra, PKB, PKS, PAN, Golkar, PPP, PSI, NasDem. Ditambah dukungan dari parpol non-parlemen: Partai Buruh, Gelora, Hanura, PBB, Partai Kebangkitan Nusantara, Garuda, dan Perindo	363.331 (42,76%).

Source: Semarang City Election Commission

### **Campaign Methods**

According to PKPU (General Election Commission Regulations), campaigning is defined as the activities of election participants to convince voters by offering a vision, mission and program, as well as/or the self-image of election participants (Setiawan, 2022). Campaign activities involve campaigners who aim to gain voter support. They convey messages in the form of visions, missions, programs, and self-image. The timing of these activities is determined by the election organizers (Castro, 2021). There are various campaign methods used in its implementation. These methods include: 1) Limited meetings, face-to-face meetings, public debates or open debates between candidate pairs, the installation of campaign materials, public rallies, the distribution of campaign materials, social media campaigns, and other activities that do not violate statutory provisions. This method since 25 September until 23 November 2024. 2) Print and electronic media advertising, online media advertising since Sunday, 10 November until Saturday, 23 Nov 2024. Quiet period since Sunday, 24 November until Tuesday, 26 Nov 2024.

Of the various campaign methods, for campaign props, campaign materials, public debates, print and electronic media advertisements, the KPU is obliged to facilitate their procurement using the regional government budget (Yahya, 2022). The candidate's campaign team independently holds campaign activities in the form of limited meetings, additional campaign props and campaign materials, public meetings, online media advertisements, and other activities that do not conflict with statutory provisions. Several articles that regulate campaign provisions are as follows

Article 16 of PKPU 13 of 2024 regulates campaign materials. Campaign activities in their implementation must: (a) Uphold the implementation of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. (b) Maintain and improve morality and religious values and national identity. (c) Increase legal awareness. (d) Provide correct, balanced, and responsible information as part of political education. (e) Respect differences in ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations in society.

Article 17, Campaign materials should be delivered in the following manner: (a) Using polite, courteous, proper, and appropriate Indonesian when delivered, spoken, and/or displayed to the public. (b) Not disturbing public order. (c) Providing information that is useful and enlightens the public. (d) Not attacking individuals, groups, factions, or other candidate pairs. (e) Not being provocative. (f) Establishing healthy political communication between election participants and the public as part of building a democratic and dignified Indonesian political culture.

Article 31, Campaign materials delivered by candidate pairs or campaign teams must comply with the following provisions: (1) must contain a vision and mission prepared based on the long-term development plan for the provincial region or the long-term development plan for the district/city region. (2) conveying the candidate pair's program. (3) candidate pairs have the right to receive information or data from the regional government in accordance with statutory provisions. (4) campaign materials can be delivered verbally and in writing to the public.

Campaign methods that can be used by candidate pair campaign teams are as follows:

*The first*, limited meeting/ face to face/ dialogue. Limited/face-to-face meetings and dialogues will be held throughout the two-month campaign period. These meetings can be held indoors or in closed buildings or through online media (Lopez, 2022). If held indoors, the maximum number of participants is 1,000, and the campaign team will submit a notification letter to the General Elections Commission (KPU), the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), and the police (Syarifudin, 2021).

The candidate pair's campaign team conducted campaign activities in crowded areas, markets, fields, tourist attractions, and community gatherings. During the campaign, there were over 300 campaign activities with limited meetings. One of the activities took place at the campaign post on Jalan Dr. Cipto in East Semarang District. The activities included exercise, a bazaar, and dialogue with the candidate pairs. The dialogue and Q&A sessions were the most frequent. They also engaged with religious leaders and visited places of worship. (Interview with Candidate Pair 01/Seto Pambudi on December 18, 2024).

*The Second*, public debate. The public debate was facilitated by the General Elections Commission (KPU). Three public debates were held (Bekmanova et al,2024), as required by law. A drafting team developed the concept for the debate. As agreed in the coordination forum between the General Elections Commission (KPU), the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), the campaign team, and the police, the debate was attended by 100 supporters of candidate pairs 01 and 02, as well as invited guests. The debate was broadcast live by the television station and also live on the Semarang City Election Commission (KPU) YouTube channel. The live debate (Kriesi, 2010) was expected to explore the candidates' visions, missions, programs, and self-images.

Table 5

Implementation of the Open Debate for the Candidate Pairs for Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Semarang in 2024

No	date	Theme	Panelists	TV
01	1 Nov	Economy, Infrastructure, and Resilience of Semarang City	Prof.Dr.Suharnomo, Prof.Dr.FX Sugiyanto, Prof. Dr. Indah Susilowati,M.Sc.Ph.D Dr Hardi winoto, S.E Prof. Dr. Wiwandari Handayani,ST,MT	CNN
02	8 Nov	Governance and Public Services of Semarang City	Prof. Dr.Nizar. M.Ag Prof Dr. Mudzakir, Prof .Dr.Ahwan Fanani M.Ag Dr Jawade Hafidz,SH,M.H,	TaTV

03	15	Education,	Prof.Dr. Ridwan Sanjaya	
	Nov	Health, Social	Dr.Sri suciati, M.Hum	Tvku
		and Culture	Prof.Dr.Lita Tyesta	
			ALW,S.H,M.Hum.	
			Prof.Abu	
			Hapsin,MA,Ph.D	
			Prof.Dr.Masrukhi,M.Pd	
			Wijayanto,S.IP,M.Si,Ph.D	

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Source: Semarang City Election Commission

The debate must be well-prepared, including technical aspects and security. The two-hour debate allows the public to assess the candidates' capabilities and capacities regarding issues in Semarang (Ola & Martasutisna, 2025). Looking ahead, the committee should be more selective and rigorous in its screening of security issues during the debate. (Interview with Seto, December 18, 2025)

*The third*, distribution of campaign materials. Candidate pairs or campaign teams when campaigning may distribute campaign materials (Manalu, Kusmanto, & Situmorang, 2025). The campaign materials (Kurniawan et al, 2025) provided include brochures, pamphlets, leaflets and posters. The KPU prints (Hyun, 2025) and facilitates these types of campaign materials. In addition, candidate pairs can provide campaign materials in the form of clothing, head coverings, eating or drinking utensils, calendars, business cards, pins, stationery, umbrellas, stickers measuring up to 10x5cm, and other campaign attributes in accordance with statutory provisions (Abdi, 2021). Each campaign material has a maximum value of IDR 100,000.00 if converted into cash.

The 01 candidate team experienced a shortage of campaign materials provided by the General Elections Commission (KPU). They organized activities such as street music and distributed campaign materials three times a week, distributing 1,500 pieces each time. Volunteers made their own t-shirts and campaign materials. They distributed 500 t-shirts per district and 300 mmt per sub-district.

*The fourth*, installation of campaign props. Campaign props (APK) (Agung, 2019) or also known as outdoor media in the form of billboards, banners and banners. Campaign props are installed with consideration for ethics, aesthetics, cleanliness, and the beauty of the city, or in accordance with statutory regulations (S, Basri, Thariq, Djusfi, & Fazri, 2024). All

campaign props (Kurniawan et al, 2024) must be removed three days before election day (quiet day). The General Elections Commission (KPU), Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), and local government agencies (Kesbangpol) conducted the removal of campaign props and materials. Under the law (Suhermanudin, 2024), the responsibility for removing campaign props and materials rests with the candidate teams.

In addition to the installation of campaign materials facilitated by the General Elections Commission (KPU), candidate pairs are permitted to add campaign materials (APK). Both candidate pairs admitted that they have added thousands of types of APK. Seto stated that candidate pair 01 has approximately 2,000 types of outdoor media.

*The fifth*, print and electronic media advertisements. The KPU allows advertisements in print media with a maximum size of one page (Dobber, Fathaigh, & Borgesius, 2019). Television stations are allowed 10 spots, each 30 seconds long, and radio stations are allowed 10 spots, each 60 seconds long (Zulfian et al, 2024). Advertisements in print and electronic mass media are carried out 14 days before the cooling off period (banda, 2024). In addition to facilitation from the KPU, the candidate pair's campaign team can also place advertisements independently.

The KPU is required to facilitate advertising in print and electronic media for 14 days. Candidate Pair 01 placed advertisements in newspapers/print and electronic media. Additional advertising in mass media was limited due to the high cost.

*The sixth*, General Meeting. The next campaign method is the general meeting. According to the law, general meetings at the district/city level can only be held once at a time (Anam, 2018). Campaign rallies can be held from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM, respecting religious days and times in Indonesia. They (Amin et al, 2024) can be held in fields, stadiums, town squares, and other open spaces. The implementation of the general meeting campaign in accordance with the KPU Semarang City Decree is as follows: candidate pair 01 held on Tuesday, 19 November 2024 and candidate pair 2 on Saturday, 23 November 2024. Both of them are held in Simpanglima square.

The general meeting of candidate pair 01 will be held at the Raden Saleh Cultural Park on Tuesday, November 19, 2024. The theme is a love and prayer concert, with Gus Alwi Gondrong in attendance. The format will include a joint prayer. The advantage of campaigning through a general meeting is that it can gather large numbers of people. The downside is that

it requires significant costs. In addition to costs, security is also a crucial factor, as it can potentially lead to friction at the grassroots level.

*The Seventh*, Advertising in Online Media. Online advertising is conducted independently by both candidate pairs (Fowler, Franz, Martin, Peskowitz, & Ridout, 2020). Online media is defined as internet-based media, accessed online via a computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone (Guess et al, 2021). It comes in the form of news websites, information portals, blogs, social media and digital applications (Vermeer, 2020). Campaign advertisements will be displayed on online media verified by the relevant institution in accordance with statutory provisions. Online media advertisements will be displayed for 14 (fourteen) days before the start of the quiet period. Online media advertisements will be in the form of one banner for each online media (Prudkyi, 2024).

*The eighth*, campaign on social media. The next campaign (Geise et al, 2025) method is through social media (Facebook, Instagram, x TikTok, etc.), and online media (online newspapers). Candidate pairs (Khalyubi et al, 2021) can create a maximum of 20 social media accounts for each application. These accounts are then registered with the General Elections Commission (KPU) according to their respective levels. The campaign team also provides a list of registered social media accounts to Bawaslu and the local police.

In addition to the official social media accounts registered with the KPU, there are social media accounts that act as volunteers during the campaign (Sari, Setiawan, & Jandevi, 2023). Regulations (Alamsyah, et al, 2021) do not yet address the treatment of social media accounts not registered with the KPU. Bawaslu has the authority to take action if there are social media accounts that violate by spreading hate speech, hoaxes, and SARA (Ethnicity, Religion, Race and Inter-group).

Article 44 of PKPU 13 of 2024 regulates design provisions: (1) social media designs contain campaign materials and candidate pair programs. (2) designs on social media consist of: writing, sound, images, a combination of writing, sound and/or images.

### **The Winning Strategy of Candidate Pair Agustina Wilujeng Pramestuti and Iswar Aminuddin**

Agustin Iswar's victory cannot be separated from the role of political parties and their figures. This was conveyed by Kadarlusman (Chairman of the Semarang City DPRD and a member of the Agustina-Iswar winning

team. One of the figures was Hendrar Prihadi (Hendi/Mayor of Semarang 2013-2022). In addition to Hendi, senior PDIP politicians also played a fair role in Agustina-Iswar's victory.

The magnet is Mas Hendi, who happens to be the deputy governor of Central Java. The party machinery is already running. Hopefully, Agustina-Iswar will continue what Mas Hendi has done. Because Hendi has built and improved Semarang City. When it comes to strategy, almost everything is the same. Like a multi-level system, each party has 12-25 people to network in one polling station. From those 25 people, the target is to recruit up to 300 people (more than half the number of people) in one polling station. (Interview with Kadarlusman, Wednesday, December 31, 2025). Figures and personalities are crucial. Even if money/money politics is given, if the figures are not considered, it won't happen. Moreover, the attack was related to non-Muslim issues. All fanatical figures/clerics will not vote for candidate pair 01. Because there have been announcements in mosques and broadcasts in WhatsApp groups urging non-Muslims and women not to vote. It would be difficult if they didn't consider the previous figures who already have strong appeal in the community. Although Mr. Iswar is from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the Nahdlatul Ulama vote was also split, with some supporting candidate pair 02. Votes are not only from the PDIP (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), but also from the community who have experienced previous leadership.

Social media campaigns are still used, as they are considered the most effective way to promote candidates. A team has been established to manage social media. Newspaper advertising is not as extensive as social media. The 25 million rupiah per neighborhood unit (RT) program is a flagship program. The hope is that development will be well-organized under Mas Hendi, and that under Bu Agustina, the community will prosper.

Support from various volunteers isn't as widespread as it appears in the media. The strategy involves volunteers declaring themselves under the name "A," then declaring under the name "B," even though they're the same person, just changing their clothes. This results in media reports showing hundreds of volunteers. The motive is to register administratively, so if there's any *dum-duman* (money politics), they'll get double the amount.

On paper, candidate pair 02 (Yoyok-Jos) could win because they have the support of nine parties, while we only have one, the PDIP. Their victory was due to the party machinery and their political figures.

The character of Hendrar Prihadi (candidate for deputy

governor/former Mayor of Semarang) influenced the vote count in Semarang City, both in the mayoral and gubernatorial elections. Andika Perkasa and Hendrar Prihadi's vote count was superior to Ahmad Lutfi-Taj Yasin's in Semarang City. Valid and invalid votes totaled 904,664. Valid votes totaled 862,528, while invalid votes totaled 42,136. Based on the recapitulation of the vote count results for the Central Java gubernatorial election in Semarang City, the Andika-Hendi candidate pair gained 569,186 (65.99%), while the Ahmad Lutfi-Taj Yasin candidate pair gained 293,342 (34.01%).

Apart from senior political figures and political machines, there are also several other factors, namely: *The first*, Using Campaign Jargon/Tagline. Candidate pair 01 registered with the Semarang City Election Commission (KPU) on Thursday, August 29, 2024. Iswar described himself as a national fiqh pair supported by interfaith figures. Iswar also described Semarang as a tolerant city. Candidate pair 01 referred to candidate pair 02 and the citizens of Semarang as *bolone dewe kabeh* (all friends). Candidate pair 01 carried the slogan "Jaguar (Jagoane Agustina Iswar)". During registration, they were accompanied by various Javanese arts and tambourine music typical of Islamic boarding school students. Apart from that, there are other persuasive narratives such as "don't choose the mayor but his deputy."

*The second*, engaging various elements of society. Since registering as mayoral candidates on August 29, 2024, Agustina-Iswar have immediately engaged in community outreach. These activities include: visiting Jati market Semarang, doing sport and exercise, attending talkshow as native speaker, mobile legend tournament, discussing with public transportation drivers, Meeting of RT/RW community leaders, Consolidation of Mighty Central Java Volunteers, Declaration of 400 Sapu Jagat volunteers (Semarang sweepers), Discussion with the Indonesian Women Entrepreneurs Association, Bazar UMKM, Discussion with the Indonesian Peace Network, Discussion with Gen Z (Youth Dream of Semarang)

Agustina-Iswar also actively attends various events on campus. This demonstrates their capacity and intense interest in education. This can be seen in the following: Undip Run, Discussions and workshops in Unika (themes: education, health, technology, and people's economy), Workshop discussion in Undip, Student seminar (importance of soft skills and networking) in STIE Semarang, Healthy walk, flashmob for FIB's 59th

anniversary in Undip, Seminar: resource person for economic talk show in FEB Undip, Seminar on nationalism and nationality in Polteka Mangunwijaya (ST Bernad Foundation), and Public Discussion (Education) in Untag.

Agustina and Iswar also regularly conduct internal consolidation meetings. PDI-P consolidation meetings feature administrators and members at the sub-district and village levels. Several consolidation events have been attended by prominent figures such as Megawati, Puan Maharani, Andika Perkasa, Hendrar Prihadi, and PDI-P politicians. Consolidation almost happens in every subdistrict like in Gunungpati, Tugu, Mijen, Ngaliyan, Semarang Timur, Pedurungan etc. Puan Maharani and Megawati also came in this consolidation.

*The third*, social media optimization. Social media not only functions as a means of disseminating campaign information, but also as a medium for two-way interaction between candidates and voters, which is able to build emotional closeness and increase public trust (Nelimarkka et al, 2015). Social media account of Agustina-Iswar (Pair 01):

Table 6

Social Media Account Campaign

No	SosMed	Account name	Admin	Follower
1	Instagram	@agustinawilujengp	Msd	69.900
		@mbak.agustin.semarang	Sulton	807
		@bestie_mbak.agustina.iswar	Theo	1.461
		@jaguarmenang	Septian	731
		@iswaraminuddin	deniko	29.100
		@misteris.smg	Pantar	706
		@nongkis.semarang	Rohman	651
		@semarang.dinamis	Nening	785
		@kawandekatsemarang	Agung deca	206
		@garis.semarang	likin	95
2	Tiktok	@mbak_agustin	Msd	15.500
		@jaguarmenang	Septian	926
		@iswaraminuddin	Deniko	6.659

		@misteris.smg	Pantar	152
		@nongkis.semarang	Rohman	203
		@semarang.dinamis	Nening	394
		@kawandekatsemarang	Agung deca	2.783
3	Facebook	Iswar aminuddin	Deniko	4.700

Source: Semarang City Election Commission

Table 7

For candidate pair 02 (Yoyok-Jos), the accounts registered include:

No	Media Sosial	Social Media Account Name and URL Address	Social Media Admin Name
1	Instagram	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/reel/DAQiH1rPa0G/?igsh=NDVtY3I5eDc0OWRx">https://www.instagram.com/reel/DAQiH1rPa0G/?igsh=NDVtY3I5eDc0OWRx</a>	Kamaludin (0 pengikut)
2	Twitter X	<a href="https://x.com/Semarang_yokjos?t=U0li3U40H9MXRx3yRYX9yw&amp;s=09">https://x.com/Semarang_yokjos?t=U0li3U40H9MXRx3yRYX9yw&amp;s=09</a>	Kamaludin (0 pengikut)
3	Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/share/jhpf7FwsiDJ8F4sD/?mibextid=qi2Omg">https://www.facebook.com/share/jhpf7FwsiDJ8F4sD/?mibextid=qi2Omg</a>	Kamaludin (0 pengikut)
4	Tiktok	<a href="https://www.tiktok.com/@semarang.yokjoss?t=8pzYw5bV5Rx&amp;_r=1">https://www.tiktok.com/@semarang.yokjoss?t=8pzYw5bV5Rx&amp;_r=1</a>	Kamaludin (2 pengikut)

Source: Semarang City Election Commission

Judging by the two tables above, Agustina-Iswar's social media accounts are more numerous and varied. Candidate pair Yoyok-Jos has four registered social media accounts. After checking, these four accounts are merely a formality for reporting to the General Elections Commission (KPU). They contain no campaign activity. Agustina-Iswar, in addition to having more social media accounts, is also diligently managed.

Through social media, the campaign team introduces the candidate

pairs to the public, especially Gen Z. The platforms used are TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, appropriate for age groups. The content themes or political messages include candidate profiles, visions and missions, and calls for young people to participate in the 2024 regional elections.

A team and coordinator are responsible for managing the candidate pairs' social media accounts. Short movies are the most popular and impactful content compared to short videos, reels, images, and live social media. These themes focus on the candidates' daily lives or activities. Daily uploads are based on audience algorithms. TikTok uploads are available in the morning from 7:00 AM to 8:00 AM, in the afternoon from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM, and at night from 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM. (Interview with Seto Pambudi/LO, Tuesday, November 18, 2025).

*The Fourth*, engaging with psis youth. Yoyok Sukawi is the CEO of PSIS. He was involved in a conflict with the PSIS supporter coordinator (the head of Panser Biru), Kepareng, also known as Wareng. Kepareng criticized the management of PSIS Semarang. Yoyok reported Kepareng to the police for alleged defamation and hate speech. Kepareng criticized PSIS management due to PSIS's declining performance. Kepareng organized a demonstration titled "Save PSIS" and displayed banners reading "Save PSIS" and "Love PSIS" at Jatidiri Stadium in Semarang.

Candidate pair 01 capitalized on this by inviting Kepareng to join their campaign team. This support for Kepareng and PSIS supporters (young people) for candidate pair 01 was evident during the campaign debates on November 1, 8, and 15, 2024, at the MG Setos Hotel and the Patra Jasa Hotel in Semarang.

*The Fifth*, leveraging organizational networks. Since registering their candidacy with the General Elections Commission (KPU) on August 29, 2024, Agustina and Iswar have begun reaching out to various Islamic religious figures. Support for Agustina-Iswar has come from various sources. Around 1,000 volunteers from 16 sub-districts from "Rumah Nasional" (National House) have declared their support for the Agustina-Iswar ticket. The "Istimewa" (Iswar, Firm, Integrity, Embracing the Community) volunteers are a volunteer group formed by Semarang residents from Makassar who have expressed their support for Agustina-Iswar.

The organic volunteer teams formed by candidate pair 01 include: Banteng Veteran or Banteng Senior, Red Ant Volunteers, Tunas Putri, the

sons and daughters of student soldiers, and Team 18, consisting of retired civil servants. Youth, community, and religious organizations also expressed their support for Agustina-Iswar, both indirectly and directly through declarations.

The *sixth*, communicating with religious figures/silaturahmi. Agustina and Iswar also engaged in community outreach through religious activities both before and during the campaign. These activities included: meeting Gus Nukhin, K.H Hadlor Ikhsan, KH Ahmad Darodji, K.H. Dzikron Abdullah, Kyai Shodiq Hamzah, visiting Haul ke-124 dan tahlil Kyai Sholeh Darat, Pilgrimage to the tomb of Kyai Pandanaran, Halaqah and network of kiai throughout Semarang, Love Concert: Joint Prayer and Blessings led by Kyai Budi Harjono

The *seventh*, Campaign Costs. During the campaign, candidate pairs are required to submit a Campaign Fund Receipt and Expenditure Report (LPPDK). Campaign funds received and disbursed consist of cash, goods, and services. The largest expenditures are for the production of campaign materials and campaign props. This can be seen below:

Table 8  
Agustin-Iswar Candidate Pair  
Donation Acceptance

No	Activity	Forms of Campaign Funds		
		Money	Goods	service
1	Candidate pair	1,450,000,000	0	0
2	Contributions from other parties are individuals	1,209,000,000	0	0
3	Bank interest	28,524	0	0
4	Total donation receipts	2,659,128,524	0	0

Source: Semarang City Election Commission

Table 9  
Donation Expenditure

No	Activity	Forms of Campaign Funds		
		Money	Goods	service

*Da'wah Communication and Inclusive Campaign Strategies in the 2024 Semarang Mayoral Election*

1	Distribution of campaign materials to the public	2,589,125,000	0	0
2	Installation of campaign props	35,000,000	0	0
3	Bank administration	20,705	0	0
4	Other expenses	122,819	0	0
	Total expenses	2,659,118,524	0	0

Source: Semarang City Election Commission

Agustina-Iswar's campaign costs were higher than Yoyok-Jos's. Agustina-Iswar spent 2,659,118,524 rupiah, while Yoyok-Jos spent 2,588,045,000 rupiah. A difference of 71,073,524 rupiah. The Yoyok-Jos campaign costs are as follows:

Table 10

Yoyok-Jos Candidate Pair Donation Acceptance

No	Aktivitas	Forms of Campaign Funds		
		Uang	Goods	Service
1	Candidate pair	2,350,000,000	0	0
2	Contributions from other parties are individuals	0	0	0
3	Bank interest	0	0	0
4	Receipt of goods resulting from the manufacture of materials/designs and/or campaign props	0	504,950,000	
	Total donation receipts	2,350,000,000	504,950,000	0

Source: Semarang City Election Commission

Table 11

Donation Expenditure

No	Activity	Forms of Campaign Funds		
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		Money	Goods	service
1	Limited Meeting	1,504,917,500	354,607,500	0
2	Face-to-Face Meetings and Dialogue	75,500,000	16,070,000	
3	Making materials/designs and/or campaign props	504,950,000		
4	Installation of Campaign Props	24,000,000	108,000,000	0
	Total expenses	2,109,367,500	478,677,500	0

Source: Semarang City Election Commission

Table 12

Balance

No	Activity	Money	Goods	Service
1	Cash in the Treasury	240,632,500	0	0
2	Goods	0	26,272,500	0

Source: Semarang City Election Commission

The eighth, inclusive work program. Agustin-Iswar's work program focuses on realizing a socially just, sustainable, and inclusive Semarang. The 2025 plan focuses on improving the quality of education, health, and social welfare. The 100-day program, from February to May 2025, has five main focuses: 1) Clean Semarang, 2) Equitable education, 3) Well-maintained and equitable infrastructure, 4) Healthy Semarang, and 5) Inclusive Semarang.

To achieve a clean Semarang, a waste sorting movement, starting with household waste and establishing waste banks, is being promoted. This can have a positive side effect in the form of a secular economic cycle from waste processing and sorting. Agustina is also procuring containers, arm-roll trucks, and containers, as well as building new and renovated waste disposal sites (TPS) in various locations.

The "Equitable Education" program encompasses equitable access, equal quality, and holistic support for students. It will also provide scholarships to high-achieving students.

The other is the development of well-maintained and equitable infrastructure. This includes city road maintenance, city drainage and river

maintenance, median maintenance, bridge maintenance, and pedestrian maintenance. For residential areas, maintenance and installation of street lighting, maintenance of neighborhood roads, and sanitation development are also included.

The program, Healthy Semarang, aims to create a healthy city, realized by increasing the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) quota and BPJS Employment membership for vulnerable workers. The number of active UHC participants has increased annually. There has been an increase in the number of vulnerable workers registered with BPJS Employment through the Pijar Semar program.

The Inclusive Semarang program aims to create a city that embraces all its citizens, including vulnerable groups. The Inspiration Houses program is being prepared in five sub-districts, including data collection on people with disabilities and the formation of facilitators for nine basic services. In addition, the Semarang City Government is providing system support in the form of waiving fees for the use of public spaces in 16 sub-districts and apartment facilities, as well as facilitating the use of city assets for non-commercial community activities.

Work programs offered by Agustina and Iswar during the campaign include: 1) 25 million in annual operational fees. 2) Waived neighborhood association (RT) fees. 3) Free public and private schools. 4) Free buses for students and alumni. 5) Free healthcare services. 6) Free Umrah (pilgrimage) and religious tourism. 7) Increased allowances for caretakers (marbot), Quran teachers, and Madin (Islamic boarding school). 8) Increased operational fees for PKK/LPMK and Psyandu (social assistance). 9) Increased honorariums for neighborhood associations (RT/RW), community service (Linmas), and youth organizations. 10) Increased honorariums for Babinsa (village supervisors), community security (kamtibmas), and community service (PPKBB) cadres.

## **CONCLUSION**

Agustina Wilujeng Pramestuti and Iswar Aminuddin employed various campaign methods to reach the public. The campaign combined online and offline strategies. The online strategy utilized various digital platforms, including social media and online media (Semarang City geographically has no internet network constraints). The offline strategy involved various activities such as exercise, campus visits, internal consolidation, factory visits, market visits, and other group meetings.

Inclusive campaigning was conducted by attending religious studies and prayer meetings, and visiting religious scholars/kyai. The political party machinery was constantly working. The role of prominent figures within the PDIP (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) also contributed to Agustin-Iswar's victory. Their pro-community work program made Semarang residents realistic and less susceptible to hoaxes, issues of ethnicity, religion, race, and class. Campaign funds were sufficient to support campaign activities. Pro-community work programs included annual operational assistance of 25 million Rupiah per neighborhood unit (RT), exemption from RT fees, free schools, and so on. This led to Agustin and Iswar's election as mayor and deputy mayor, leading to victory in the 2024 regional elections in Semarang.

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