

# Winning Strategy of the Elected Village Head in the Tugumulyo Village Election, Ogan Komering Ilir Regency

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to analyze the winning strategies of the elected village head in the 2019 Tugumulyo Village Head Election, focusing on the formulation and application of offensive and defensive strategies along with supporting factors for success.

**Methodology/approach:** The research took place in Tugumulyo Village, Lempuing District, Ogan Komering Ilir Regency, South Sumatra, Indonesia. A qualitative descriptive method was applied through observation, open interviews, and documentation. Informants included the elected village head, campaign team, religious leaders, heads of hamlets, and community members. Data were analyzed thematically to identify the main factors influencing the outcome.

**Results/findings:** The elected candidate, Sugianto, applied offensive strategies such as a clear vision and mission, an organized campaign team, religious facility support, and direct engagement with residents. Defensive strategies included cultural closeness with the majority Javanese community, active participation in social events, and maintaining personal relationships with voters. These efforts produced a victory with sixty point five percent of votes, winning thirty seven out of forty polling stations, with voter turnout reaching eighty three point forty eight percent.

**Conclusions:** A well balanced mix of offensive and defensive strategies, supported by cultural alignment and strong community ties, can greatly increase the likelihood of winning local elections.

**Limitations:** The study is limited to one case in a single village, which may affect broader applicability.

**Contribution:** The study enriches local political strategy literature and offers practical insights for researchers, policymakers, and future candidates in rural elections.

**Keywords:** *Defensive Strategy, Offensive Strategy, Political Strategy, Rural Politics, Village Head Election.*

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## 1. Introduction

The election of a village head is one of the clearest manifestations of democratic practice at the local level and serves as a means for the community to determine the direction of village development and governance. The village head plays a strategic role in driving government functions, managing resources, and maintaining social stability (AS & Kurnia, 2022). The success or failure of village leadership directly affects the welfare of the community, making the election process politically, socially, and culturally significant in Indonesia. Within the framework of village autonomy in Indonesia, village head elections (Pilkades) are regulated under Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages and its implementing regulations. These regulations affirm that Pilkades is a form of democratization at the village level, where citizens have the full right to choose a leader deemed capable

of managing governance and empowering the community (Yunas, 2016). Pilkades are conducted directly by villagers based on democratic, honest, and fair principles.

Since the implementation of simultaneous Pilkades in 2015, village elections across regions have shown relatively high voter participation rates. Data from the Ministry of Home Affairs indicate that the national voter turnout in Pilkades has exceeded 70 percent. This reflects strong public enthusiasm for directly selecting their leaders. However, high participation does not necessarily equate to an ideal local democracy. Various challenges, such as money politics, elite domination, kinship influences, and ineffective campaign strategies, are still frequently encountered, diminishing the essence of democratic practice at the village level (Prasetyanta, Muhammad, & Goraah, 2024). Similar phenomena occur in South Sumatra Province, particularly in the Ogan Komering Ilir (OKI) Regency, a vast region with significant sociocultural diversity. The regency consists of hundreds of villages with varied community characteristics, causing campaign patterns, winning strategies, and voter behavior to be strongly influenced by local factors. Pilkades in this region are not merely a leadership selection process but also an arena of competition between social groups, community figures, and kinship networks.

The Pilkades in Tugumulyo Village, Lempuing District, Ogan Komering Ilir Regency in 2019 exemplified this dynamic. According to the election committee, the election involved three candidates with 1,350 registered voters and a turnout rate of 83 percent. In this contest, Sugianto, a first-time candidate, won with 612 votes, outperforming both the incumbent and candidates who had previously run multiple times. This victory cannot be separated from the role of political campaigning, which involves a series of organized communication activities aimed at creating certain impressions among the public within a specific timeframe. In a political context, campaigns function as vital instruments for candidates to introduce their visions and missions, as well as to build their public image (Syah & Nurdin, 2023).

Sugianto's success was strongly influenced by the implementation of well-planned campaign strategies, including personal approaches to the community, the use of socio-cultural bases, and the application of offensive and defensive strategies in the campaign. These strategies not only strengthened his popularity and positive image but also neutralized his opponents' attacks and consolidated support across different societal groups. To date, scholarly studies on Pilkades-winning strategies in the OKI Regency remain limited, especially those examining the combination of offensive and defensive strategies implemented by first-time candidates in highly competitive contexts. Most previous research has focused on social capital, money politics, or the influence of community leaders, without thoroughly analyzing how dual strategies are formulated and executed effectively within the village's socio-political dynamics.

This study aims to analyze the winning strategy employed by the elected village head in the 2019 Tugumulyo Pilkades, focusing on the formulation and implementation of offensive and defensive strategies, as well as supporting factors such as family support, socio-cultural background, and campaign management. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed to reveal the relationship between campaign strategies and election outcomes. To achieve this objective, this study provides a comprehensive discussion of the political strategies of the winning candidate, the socio-political conditions of Tugumulyo Village, and the effectiveness of the strategies used. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the correlation between campaign strategies and the final results of Pilkades.

The victory of a newcomer candidate in Pilkades is a rare phenomenon. This raises an important question regarding how effective campaign strategies can reshape the political landscape at the village level. This study is expected to enrich the literature on local political strategy and offer practical insights for future village head candidates in designing democratic, effective, and ethical campaigns. Despite numerous studies on Pilkades, few have specifically examined the combined application of offensive and defensive strategies by first-time candidates, particularly in competitive and socially complex village environments. Most previous studies highlight the role of community figures, money politics, or socio-cultural factors but do not delve into how campaign strategies are crafted, executed, and adapted to local conditions.

To date, very few studies have paid particular attention to the simultaneous implementation of offensive and defensive strategies by newcomer candidates in Pilkades, especially in regions with complex social dynamics, such as Tugumulyo Village. This research offers novelty in two main aspects: first, the analytical approach to combining offensive and defensive strategies in the context of a first-time political candidate; second, strengthening the understanding of how socio-political village conditions influence the effectiveness of campaign strategies. Thus, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for theoretical development and for improving participatory and high-quality local-political practices.

Based on the above explanation, it is evident that winning strategies play an important role in determining pilkades outcomes. To understand this phenomenon more deeply, theoretical reviews and relevant research are required. Therefore, Chapter II discusses the concept of political strategy, the characteristics of Pilkades, common forms of strategies used in local political contests, and findings from previous studies related to this topic. These discussions provide a strong analytical foundation for examining the winning strategy of the elected village head in Tugumulyo during the 2019 Pilkades.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Political Strategy**

According to Schroder (2013), political strategy is a framework of steps or plans designed to achieve political objectives, namely, techniques used by political actors to obtain or maintain power, whether in elections or governance. This strategy may involve implementing laws, establishing institutions, formulating policies that reflect political ideals, and efforts to win electoral competition. In 2009, Schroder emphasized that political strategy is highly important for political parties and categorized it into two main types: offensive and defensive. In line with this concept, Oktasari, Fahri, and Sanyoto (2024) show that defensive strategies are used to gain support without making promises, but rather through material assistance and contributions of ideas. Meanwhile, Napitupulu (2018) found that offensive strategies involve disseminating development visions and missions, while defensive strategies are carried out through intensive communication and strengthening collective enthusiasm. The combination of both, when implemented consistently, can have a significant impact on political support.

#### **2.1.1 Offensive Strategy**

The offensive strategy is used to expand the voter base or increase the vote share by highlighting favorable differences between the candidate and their opponents and requires human resources with a positive public image. The implementation of this strategy must be supported by a clear campaign vision and mission, a solid success team, and a well-planned campaign strategy, including market expansion and penetration strategies (Schroder, 2013). Suyuti and Mukhlis (2021) found that continuous socialization, approaching influential figures, and segmenting campaign messages effectively expanded support beyond the initial voter base. Meanwhile, Evendi and Kurnia (2020) show that emphasizing track records and program superiority, combined with visual and social media campaigns, can shape public opinion and increase vote acquisition. These findings highlight the importance of consistent candidate differentiation, supported by an organized campaign team, to achieve electoral victory.

In a study by Aldi, Febriyanti, and Amaliatulwalidain (2024), the offensive strategy was implemented through several programs, such as social assistance, Yasin recitation gatherings, free education initiatives, and infrastructure development. Additionally, the involvement of local religious leaders in religious activities strengthens the candidate's legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Although maternal and child health campaign efforts were not fully optimized due to financial constraints, the overall strategy succeeded in increasing community acceptance and support in the long run. This underscores that offensive strategies rely not only on program differentiation but also on the candidate's ability to build trust through social and cultural engagement.

#### 2.1.1.1 Possessing a Campaign Vision and Mission

In political contexts, vision and mission function as guiding principles for formulating programs, communication strategies, building public image, and attracting voter support. A clear vision helps voters understand the direction and aspirations that the candidate seeks to achieve, while the mission provides a concrete depiction of the steps to be taken (Fatimah, 2018). The clarity of a candidate's vision and mission determines the effectiveness of campaign messages, shapes positive perceptions, and is a key factor in gaining and maintaining voter support. (Pawitri 2017) found that in the Village Head Election in Kawedusan Village, persuasive messaging through image building—focusing on development and welfare—along with direct home visits and the use of media such as billboards and posters, helped candidates effectively convey their vision, mission, and work programs to the public. Meanwhile (Rahmaini, 2021) emphasized that political marketing strategies involving vision- and mission-based approaches combined with direct voter engagement helped candidates win votes through more targeted and personalized methods.

#### 2.1.1.2 Possessing a Success Team

A successful team in the context of Village Head Elections (Pilkades) refers to a working group tasked with assisting the candidate in carrying out all campaign processes in an organized and effective manner at the village level. This team is responsible for planning and implementing strategies to mobilize support, communicating with residents, organizing campaign activities, and ensuring that the candidate's messages reach all voters to increase the chances of victory (Hasibuan, 2021). The success team thus becomes a crucial component of strengthening social networks, disseminating the candidate's vision and mission, and maximizing campaign reach. Suhara and Kamaludin (2021) found that a successful team implementing organized communication strategies—including the use of social media and WhatsApp groups—significantly increased public attention and voter support. Additionally, Munasti and Putra (2022) show that successful teams are often formed based on kinship ties, trust, and social networks. These teams play a crucial role throughout the Pilkades process to support the candidate; however, they are temporary and disband after the election.

#### 2.1.1.3 Possessing a Campaign Strategy

A campaign strategy is a systematic plan or set of steps designed by a candidate or campaign team to achieve specific political goals, such as winning elections. This strategy includes message management, selection of communication media, determination of target voters, organization of activities, and allocation of resources to ensure effective and efficient campaigns (Nur, 2019). With the right strategy, campaigns can build a positive image of the candidate, attract voter support, and address the challenges posed by political competitors.

Research in the context of Pilkades shows that well-planned campaign strategies and effective communication play important roles in shaping public opinion and influencing voter choices (Pawitri, 2017). Furthermore, the application of offensive and defensive communication strategies through various media, such as billboards, banners, social media, and WhatsApp groups, serves as a key element in reaching target voters. Communication efforts are often directed toward women, given their significant role in disseminating information within the family and community. These structured and consistent strategies have proven effective in increasing community support, thereby enhancing a candidate's chances of winning the election (Suhara and Kamaludin, 2021).

#### 2.1.2 *Defensive Strategy*

The defensive strategy is implemented to maintain the majority of support or political market share by preserving the existing voter base, strengthening closeness with the community, leveraging majority support, and understanding reports of election success for evaluation purposes. Defensive strategies may take the form of market maintenance, focusing on retaining loyal voters while reaching out to new or occasional voters, or market relinquishment, which involves reallocating resources from less strategic segments to more promising areas (Schroder, 2013). The application of this concept is evident in the study by Prasta Bisana, Azhar, and Apriani, which found that incumbent actors build a “political machine” to maintain voter loyalty through continuous programs and a focus on strategic segments. Similar findings appear in Untari's (2024) thesis, showing that defensive strategies were carried out by

maintaining supporters up to voting day, formulating programs aligned with local needs, and providing incentives to swing voters, thereby preserving and expanding electoral support.

#### 2.1.2.1 Possessing the Ability to Strengthen Proximity to the Community

Possessing the ability to strengthen proximity to the community refers to a candidate's or leader's capacity to build strong relationships and communicate effectively with village residents. This ability includes sensitivity to the needs, aspirations, and problems of the community, as well as active engagement through house-to-house visits, open dialogue, and participation in social activities (Supriadi, 2021). By consistently building closeness, leaders can gain trust, support, and legitimacy from the community—elements crucial for successful leadership and sustainable village development.

Parwati (2021) shows that a village head's ability to establish open and participatory communication significantly influences the strengthening of relationships with the community and facilitates the implementation of development programs. A study in Suka Makmur Village revealed that village heads who actively engage in direct interactions with residents through dialogues and deliberations can increase public trust and participation in various village initiatives. Furthermore, Zalukhu, Harefa, Harefa, and Harefa (2024) emphasize that intensive communication approaches and involvement in social activities encourage development innovation and reinforce community support for village leadership. Thus, the ability to strengthen proximity to the community is a key factor in building legitimacy and ensuring the success of village development projects.

#### 2.1.2.2 Majority Community Support for the Candidate

Majority Community Support for the Candidate refers to the largest group of voters supporting a particular village-head candidate. This majority support is a key determinant of a candidate's success in the election, as it reflects the alignment between the candidate's vision, mission, and programs with the needs and aspirations of the community (Sihombing, 2024). Such majority support is essential because it forms the foundation of political legitimacy and directly influences a candidate's electoral outcome. Understanding the characteristics and needs of the majority enables candidates to design campaign strategies that are effective and relevant to public aspirations (Salsabila & Isyanto, 2025).

Konterius and Ndjandji (2025) demonstrate that majority community support is the main factor determining success in village head elections. Political participation levels are highly influenced by citizens' trust and perceived alignment of the candidate with their needs and aspirations. Meanwhile, Qulsum, Purnamasari, and Azizah (2020) stressed that effective communication between candidates and the community, as well as the community's understanding of the candidate's vision and mission, strengthens majority support. This support then becomes the basis of political legitimacy and the principal determinant of Pilkada outcomes.

#### 2.1.2.3 Understanding Reports of Electoral Success

Understanding Reports of Electoral Success refers to the process of collecting and evaluating data and information related to election results, including voter turnout, the effectiveness of campaign strategies, and the achievement of the targeted voter support. This process is essential for assessing how far campaign objectives have been met, identifying successes or challenges encountered during the election, and serving as material for improvement in future elections (Swandari, Lukman, & Wirantari, 2025). By understanding electoral success reports, campaign teams can make more accurate strategic decisions and increase their future winning potential. Ariyati (2019) shows that evaluating election results is crucial for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of election implementation. The e-voting system was found to accelerate the election process, although technical constraints still require improvement to enhance future electoral success.

### 3. Research Methodology

The author employed a qualitative descriptive methodology. As an investigative method, the qualitative approach aims to gain an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon through the narratives, experiences, and perspectives of actors in the field. In this context, the researcher plays a central role in uncovering the meanings behind social actions and connecting abstract ideas to empirical realities

(Charismana, Retnawati, & Dhewantoro, 2022). This method was chosen because it enables a comprehensive depiction of the socio-political dynamics involved in the winning process of the elected village head in Tugumulyo Village, Lempuing District, Ogan Komering Ilir Regency in 2019, by involving various actors from both the village government and the community. To obtain relevant and in-depth data, the author conducted interviews with several key informants directly involved in the Pilkades process. The informants included the elected village head, members of the success team, religious leaders, hamlet heads, and representatives of the general public. The following is a summary of the research informants.

Table 1. Research Informants/Respondents

No	Informant Category	Total
1.	Elected Village Head	1
2.	Success Team	1
3.	Religious Leaders	2
4.	Hamlet Heads	5
5	Residents/Community Members	10

Source: Processed by Author, 2024

The data obtained from the informants were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns, strategies, and factors that influenced the candidate's success. This technique enables researchers to explore the meanings behind campaign strategies, the role of community leaders, and the public's response to the political process at the village level. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from various types of informants (village officials, community leaders, and general residents), and method triangulation was carried out through a combination of field observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. This approach aimed to test the data consistency and ensure that the research findings possessed high reliability and accuracy.

This study relied on three main data-collection techniques. First, direct observation was conducted at research locations such as the Village Office, hamlet head residences, and community gathering spots to capture social dynamics contextually. Second, open-ended interviews were conducted flexibly and in depth with informants to obtain rich and honest data. Third, documentation was used to supplement the data through archives such as Pilkades invitation letters, campaign documentation, and other reading materials such as policy papers, journals, and local media (Waruwu 2023). Through this approach, this study is expected to comprehensively describe the village head's winning process and contribute new insights into local political strategy within the context of grassroots democracy.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Offensive Strategy

#### 4.1.1 Possessing Clear Campaign Vision and Mission

The formulation of a vision and mission in a village head campaign is not merely symbolic; it serves as a strategic instrument that directs the trajectory of village development. According to Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, the village head's vision and mission must be integrated into the Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Desa (RPJMDes), ensuring that development is measurable, participatory and sustainable. In line with the strategic alignment theory, a clear vision and mission enable the synchronization of village governance objectives and community needs while strengthening transparency and accountability (Bryson, 2024).

In Tugumulyo Village, Mr. Sugianto emphasized improving social awareness, strengthening the local economy, developing human resources, and promoting development based on customary, cultural, and religious values. The mission he formulated centered on five main pillars: (1) improving the quality of village apparatus, (2) strengthening governance, (3) physical and non-physical development, (4) collaboration with the business sector, and (5) strengthening community participation and social solidarity. Compared with the findings of Bastian (2019), a vision and mission oriented toward

community empowerment have been shown to effectively increases village independence while reducing reliance on external funding.

Table 2. Vision and Mission of Mr. Sugianto

Vision	In the village head election, Mr. Sugianto expressed his aspiration to make Tugumulyo Village a better place to live by enhancing social awareness, improving economic capacity, developing human resources, and promoting development in various sectors aligned with the village’s customs, culture, religion, and spiritual values.
Mision	The development framework of Tugumulyo Village still needs to be strengthened
	Improving the quality of human resources among village government apparatus
	Enhancing development in various sectors, both physical and mental
	Increasing the efficiency of village governance
	Encouraging business sector participation in village development and community activities while fostering community self-reliance
	Strengthening community social awareness
	Enhancing development in various fields, both physical and non-physical

Source: Field Data, 2024

The implementation of this vision and mission is reflected in several infrastructure development initiatives within the village, such as the renovation of the village office and multipurpose hall. These improvements upgraded public facilities, enhanced access to social services, and increased communal interaction spaces. However, these physical achievements should be further analyzed using a results-based management perspective, which measures how far development contributes to improving the quality of life rather than focusing solely on physical outputs. Therefore, it is essential for village heads to formulate visions and missions that are not only realistic and contextual but also outcome-oriented, such as improving household income, education quality, and social cohesion in the village.



Figure 1. Condition of the Tugumulyo Village Office & Tugumulyo Multipurpose Building  
Source: Field Data, 2024

These achievements demonstrate that a well-formulated vision and mission not only provides direction for development but also serves as an instrument to strengthen governance, community participation, and village government accountability. This affirms that village leadership grounded in a clear vision and mission has greater potential to effectively promote sustainable development and community empowerment in the village.

#### 4.1.2 Possessing a Successful Campaign Team

A campaign team plays a crucial role in winning the village head election. The team assists the candidate in formulating winning strategies, disseminating the vision and mission, mobilizing support, managing the campaign, and monitoring and evaluating the results. Bastian (2022) asserts that a campaign team is essential for determining a candidate's victory in village elections. The team contributes by designing winning strategies, socializing the candidate's vision and mission, gathering electoral support, managing campaign activities, and tracking performance of the campaign. Additionally, the campaign team supports voter data collection, crisis management, increased public participation, and the development of a positive public image, all of which enhance the candidate's chances of winning.

In the case of the Tugumulyo Village Head, the campaign team was formed well before the campaign period by dividing the members into two groups, each led by a chairperson, with a total of 12 members. This clear division of structure enables efficient work processes and more organized coordination in executing campaign tasks. Therefore, the findings in Tugumulyo Village are consistent with Bastian (2022), who concluded that the success of village head candidates is significantly influenced by the presence of a solid, well-organized, and optimally functioning campaign team.

#### 4.1.3 Possessing a Campaign Strategy

Mr. Sugianto employed various campaign strategies tailored to the needs and social conditions of Tugumulyo community. His main strategies included formulating a vision and mission aligned with residents' expectations, establishing an organized campaign team, providing facility assistance to places of worship, and conducting personal approaches through attendance at community events and distributing monetary assistance.

Tabel 3. Strategi Pemenangan Bapak Sugianto

Winning Strategies of Mr. Sugianto	
Village Head Election 2019	Winning strategies used by Mr. Sugianto in the 2019 village head election: 1. Formulating a vision and mission 2. Forming a campaign team 3. Improving mosque facilities 4. Providing monetary assistance to all residents of Tugumulyo Village 5. Promoting himself by attending residents' events

Source: Elected Village Head, 2024

Based on the data above, it can be seen that the campaign team consisted of two groups with a total of 12 members, each led by a chairperson. This team-based approach helped deliver program messages and expand the scope of socialization efforts in the community. Furthermore, the improvement of mosque facilities was one of the main strategies implemented. Mr. Sugianto provided prayer rugs, women's prayer garments (mukenah), mops, and carpets to all the mosques in the five hamlets of the village. Table 4 provides information on the number of mosques that received these facilities.

Table 4. Number of Mosques Receiving Facilities

Location	Number of Mosques
Hamlet 1	6 Mosques
Hamlet 2	5 Mosques
Hamlet 3	7 Mosques
Hamlet 4	6 Mosques



Hamlet 5	9 Mosques
<b>Total</b>	<b>33 Mosques</b>

Source: Campaign Team of Mr. Sugianto, 2024

This provision of facilities was confirmed by the local mosque administrators. For instance, the management of Lorong Bukit Mosque in Hamlet 1 stated that the campaign team of Mr. Sugianto donated three floor brooms, one floor mop, and two outdoor brooms on behalf of Candidate 1. Likewise, the management of Lorong Pak Gogok Mosque in Hamlet 4 confirmed receiving one floor mop, two floor brooms, one outdoor broom, and one roll of mosque carpet from the campaign team. Meanwhile, several mosque administrators in Hamlets 2, 3, and 5 mentioned that due to annual changes in mosque management, they were unable to provide detailed information about the donations, as the events had taken place five years ago.

#### 4.2 Defensive Strategies

##### 4.2.1 Possessing the Ability to Further Approach the Community

In village head elections, a candidate's ability to build close relationships with the community is crucial in convincing residents that the candidate is worthy of leading the village for the next term (Bastian, 2022). Mr. Sugianto implemented this strategy by actively attending various social events, such as wedding ceremonies and religious gatherings (*pengajian*), which served as effective channels for building trust and emotional closeness with the residents. His presence at community events not only demonstrated respect and concern but also provided opportunities to directly convey his vision and mission. Through these efforts, residents became more familiar with him and felt a stronger personal connection, which significantly increased their trust and support for his candidacy.

This strategy received positive responses from the communities. For example, residents of Hamlet 3 in Tugumulyo Village felt appreciated when the candidate made time to attend their family wedding. During these occasions, Mr. Sugianto delivered his vision and mission to the attendees and engaged in personal interactions that further strengthened his relationship with the villagers. These actions create an impression of deep attention and care for the community. Moreover, his active presence at various community gatherings made residents feel valued and acknowledged. This response reinforced his positive image and directly contributed to the growing support he received during the election.

Table 5. Strategies for Approaching the Community

No.	Strategy Implemented	Description	Community Response
1	Attending community events	Attending weddings, <i>pengajian</i> , and other social gatherings to build closeness	Residents felt appreciated and acknowledged
2	Conveying vision and mission directly	Utilizing community events to introduce his vision and mission	Residents became more familiar with and trusting of the candidate
3	Personal interaction during events	Directly interacting with residents, greeting attendees, and showing attention	Increased trust and support
4	Providing symbolic assistance during events (cash envelopes)	Offering an envelope to families hosting the events as a gesture of care	Created a positive impression and personalized attention

Source: Field Data, 2024

Through these strategies, Mr. Sugianto successfully built trust and emotional closeness with Tugumulyo Village. His personal approach, demonstrated through his direct presence at various community events and intensive interactions, not only strengthened his positive image but also reinforced social bonds that significantly contributed to his success in winning the village head election (Agung, Indrajat, Harjo, & Juantara, 2022). Therefore, the strategy of approaching the community proved to be a key factor in the effectiveness of the campaign and in achieving the desired outcome.

#### 4.2.2 Majority Community Support Toward the Candidate

In the context of village head elections, the community's demographic and sociocultural characteristics play an important role in determining voting patterns. In Tugumulyo Village, data show that the majority of residents are of Javanese ethnicity, accounting for 50%, followed by Komerling (25%), Balinese (18%), and Batak (12%) ethnicities. The dominance of the Javanese ethnic group is a key factor in the village's political dynamics because the village head candidate, Mr. Sugianto, also comes from the Javanese community. This shared cultural and ethnic background facilitated more effective communication and strengthened trust between him and the majority population.

Table 6. Ethnic Composition in Tugumulyo Village

Ethnic Group	Percentage (%)
Javanese	50%
Komerling	25%
Balinese	18%
Batak	12%

Source: Field Data, 2024

Furthermore, residents tend to favor candidates whom they believe can represent and respond to their needs, such as improving infrastructure and community welfare. The influence of local leaders and the candidate's track record also serves as an important consideration. Although the distribution of money or material incentives may influence voting behavior, active participation and community awareness of a candidate's quality remain decisive factors. The presence of other significant ethnic groups highlights the need for inclusive approaches so that all cultural communities feel represented in the village's political processes. The use of diverse daily languages, such as Palembang Malay and ethnic languages spoken by each group, also strengthens social and political interactions at the local level. Thus, cultural affinity between the candidate and the majority community serves as essential political capital for securing broad support, while inclusive strategies are necessary to maintain social harmony and encourage participation from all residents. These findings underscore the importance of understanding the sociocultural composition in formulating effective electoral strategies.

#### 4.2.3 Understanding Election Results Reporting

In the Tugumulyo Village Head Election held on May 14, 2019, candidate number 01, Mr. Sugianto, won the election by defeating candidate number 02, Mr. Bobby Nasution. The following data present information on candidates, voter participation, and vote counts.

Table 7. Candidate Data for Tugumulyo Village Election

Name	Age	Education Level
Sugianto	45 years	Senior High School
Bobby Nasution	50 years	D3

Source: Tugumulyo Village Office, 2024

The table shows a difference in age and educational background between the two candidates, with Mr. Sugianto being younger by five years but holding a slightly lower educational qualification than Mr. Nasution.

Table 8. Voters List

Voters List			Voter Turnout (%)
Number of Polling Stations (TPS)	Total Registered Voters (DPT)	Number of Voters Who Cast Votes	
40	16.450	14.230	83,48 %

Source: Tugumulyo Village Head Office, 2024

Of the 16,450 registered voters, 14,230 cast their votes, resulting in a turnout rate of 83.48%. This indicates strong public enthusiasm, despite approximately 2,220 eligible voters not participating, possibly due to schooling or employment outside the area.

Table 9. Ballot Data

Ballots			Valid and Invalid Ballots		
Total Ballots	Used	Unused	Valid Votes	Invalid Votes	Total Valid & Invalid Votes
17.682	14.230	3.452	13.980	250	14.230

Source: Tugumulyo Village Office

These data show that of the total 17,682 ballots, 14,230 were used in the election. A total of 13,980 responses were deemed valid, while 250 were invalid.

Table 10. Election Results

Candidate No	Candidate Name	Votes Obtained	Percentage (%)
1.	Sugianto	8.428	60.5%
2.	Boby Nasution	5.552	39.5%
<b>Total</b>		<b>13.980</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Source: Tugumulyo Village Office

Mr. Sugianto won the election with 8,428 votes (60.5%), while Mr. Bobby Nasution obtained 5,552 votes (39.5%), resulting in a vote margin of 2,876, a significant lead. To gain deeper insights, the researcher conducted interviews with the heads of the five hamlets (dusun) who oversaw 40 TPS in Tugumulyo Village.

Table 11. Hamlet Heads in Tugumulyo Village

Name	Hamlet
Purbani	Hamlet 1
Agus Prajadi	Hamlet 2
Edi Irawan	Hamlet 3
Hidayat	Hamlet 4
Suranto	Hamlet 5

Source: Tugumulyo Village Office

Hamlet 1 (10 TPS): Mr. Sugianto won 9 TPS and Mr. Bobby Nasution won 1 TPS. The majority of the population is Javanese, the same ethnic group as Mr. Sugianto. Hamlet 2 (seven TPS): Mr. Sugianto won all TPS. Hamlet 3 (6 TPS): Mr. Sugianto won 4 TPS; Mr. Bobby Nasution won 2 TPS. This area is predominantly Komerang, the same ethnic group as Mr. Nasution. Hamlet 4 (8 TPS): Mr. Sugianto won all the TPS. Hamlet 5 (8 TPS): Mr. Sugianto also won all TPS; the hamlet is mostly Javanese.

Field results indicate that ethnic similarity played a significant role in shaping voter preferences, particularly in hamlets with Javanese majorities, where Mr. Sugianto secured dominant support. Meanwhile, in Hamlet 3, where Komerang residents are the majority, Mr. Bobby Nasution's performance was better. Overall, Mr. Sugianto won 60.5% of the valid votes and secured victory in 37 of the 40 TPS. The high voter turnout of 83.48% reflects strong public involvement in the election. Cultural affinity, personal and social strategies, and strong support from the campaign team were the main drivers of electoral success.

#### 4.2.4 Campaign Financing

Mr. Sugianto allocated a substantial amount of money to maximize his campaign period for the 2019 Tugumulyo Village Head Election. The researcher obtained information regarding the detailed expenses from the registration phase to the end of the campaign period, as follows:

Table 12. Budget Breakdown

No.	Budget Items	Total
1.	Village Head Candidate Registration	20.000.000
2.	Campaign Team	10.000.000
3.	Visiting Community Events	25.000.000
4.	Donations to Mosques	5.000.000
5.	Consumption/Food	15.000.000
<b>Total</b>		<b>75.000.000</b>

Source: Elected Village Head, Mr. Sugianto, 2024

As seen in the table above, the total expenditure from the registration period to the end of the campaign reached IDR 75,000,000. This amount reflects the significant financial investment made by Mr. Sugianto in his effort to win the 2019 Tugumulyo Village Head Election. The registration fee amounted to IDR 20,000,000, followed by IDR 10,000,000, which was allocated for the campaign team. Meanwhile, the budget for visiting community events totaled IDR 25,000,000, and the final expense category—consumption—reached IDR 15,000,000. Despite the substantial expenditure, these efforts were successful, as Mr. Sugianto was ultimately elected Village Head.

This finding is consistent with previous studies that show that economic capital significantly influences both political and social capital. The large budget allocated by Sugianto strengthened social support through community engagement while simultaneously enhancing his political capital in the election. Thus, maximizing economic resources can be a decisive factor in winning a village head election (Salbari, Juantara, & Kurniwan, 2022).

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 Conclusion

Mr. Sugianto's success in winning the 2019 Tugumulyo Village Head Election cannot be separated from the synergistic application of two core strategies: offensive and defensive. The offensive strategy was reflected through the formulation of clear and relevant vision and mission statements, the establishment of a solid campaign team, and well-planned campaign activities involving the improvement of public facilities and direct engagement with the residents. Meanwhile, the defensive strategy was implemented through efforts to build personal closeness by actively attending community events, leveraging a shared cultural identity with the majority population, and maintaining the voter base through continuous communication and consolidation up to election day.

The combination of these two strategies effectively strengthened his positive image, increased voter turnout to 83.48%, and secured a significant majority of votes (60.5%). Thus, the research objective of revealing the effectiveness of the dual-strategy approach in village head elections was achieved. The findings demonstrate that a new candidate can win a village head election by simultaneously applying offensive and defensive strategies—an approach rarely discussed in studies on village-level political strategy. Therefore, this study not only enriches theoretical discussions on local political strategy but also provides practical contributions for future village head candidates and political actors in designing campaigns that are more effective, democratic, and aligned with the sociocultural context of rural communities.

### 5.2 Suggestions

1. Future village head candidates should not rely solely on traditional strategies rooted in cultural proximity; they should also develop leadership capacity, program innovation, and more modern political communication skills.
2. Given the growing role of social media, upcoming village head campaigns should integrate digital communication strategies to better reach young voters and those who are difficult to access through conventional methods.

3. To ensure a healthier village democracy, future Pilkades processes should involve the community in the early stages of vision–mission formulation so that candidates offer programs that are genuinely aligned with public needs.
4. Local governments and Pilkades committees should update regulations related to campaign mechanisms to be more adaptive to current developments, including rules on social media usage, campaign finance transparency, and the prevention of vote-buying practices.
5. Future research should compare the effectiveness of offensive and defensive strategies across multiple villages to identify general patterns that may serve as a comprehensive model of local political strategy.

### 5.3 Research Benefits

#### a. Theoretical Benefits

This research enriches the body of knowledge on local political studies, particularly regarding strategies for winning village head election. The findings on the simultaneous use of offensive and defensive strategies offer a new contribution to the development of political strategy theory, demonstrating that combining both approaches can increase the likelihood of victory for new candidates in village political contests in China. Furthermore, this research can serve as an academic reference for expanding the literature on local democracy and culturally driven political dynamics at the village level.

#### b. Practical Benefits

This study provides insights for village head candidates, campaign teams, and local political actors regarding effective campaign strategies for winning Pilkades. The findings highlight the importance of formulating clear vision and mission statements, strengthening campaign teams, maintaining voter bases, and leveraging cultural affinity and direct involvement in community activities to win elections. For village governments and Pilkades organizers, this study can serve as a reference for formulating regulations that are more transparent and adaptive to evolving political strategies, thereby promoting healthier, more democratic, and participatory village-level political competition.

### Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited to one Pilkades case in Tugumulyo Village and, therefore, may not represent patterns in other regions. The data collected were retrospective, which may have introduced bias. Additionally, the analysis focused only on the strategies of the winning candidate without a direct comparison with other candidates. Future research should include multiple locations, employ quantitative methods, and consider external factors such as social media and broader local political dynamics to enhance the richness of the findings.

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