



Agitation and Propaganda Communication Strategy in The Political Campaign of Member of the Republic of Indonesia's House of Representatives

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the communication strategies of agitation and propaganda employed in the political campaign of DPR RI Member M.F. during the 2024 Legislative Election. The research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach and was conducted in North Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi Province. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The primary informant of this study is M.F., who served as a Member of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI) for the 2019–2024 period. The key informant is M.A., the head of M.F.'s campaign team, while supporting informants include I.P.I., the Regent of North Luwu (2016–2024), and H.S.E., the Speaker of the North Luwu Regional House of Representatives (2025–2029). The findings reveal that M.F. and his team consistently applied agitation communication strategies during limited face-to-face campaign events across multiple locations in the electoral district. In addition, five out of Harold D. Lasswell's seven propaganda techniques were identified in the campaign: Glittering Generalities, Transfer, Testimonial, Plain Folks, and Card Stacking. These strategies were instrumental in mobilizing public awareness, shaping political attitudes, and encouraging voters to reject money politics while prioritizing candidates' track records.

Introduction

Communication strategies in political campaigns are currently undergoing a transformation, particularly in the digital era. New media platforms play a crucial role as a force for wider information dissemination. The use of new media to support campaign success serves as a means of conveying the vision, mission, and work programs promised by political candidates. Conducting political campaigns using new media is a crucial factor in increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of political campaigns (Denton et al., 2023; Alodat et al., 2023; Guess et al., 2023). New media can support online campaign implementation. New media, one of which is social media, can also serve as a bridge to strengthen the relationship between politicians and their voters, facilitating communication. The presence of social media today can serve as a medium for political communication with a wider audience (Hayat, 2021). The role of communication in disseminating ideas and concepts has led to the proliferation of agitation and propaganda as strategies used by politicians to gain public attention and achieve political goals. Agitation and propaganda share the same goal: influencing public opinion, a common use of which is seen in the lead-up to a political contest to strengthen their own political position or weaken their opponents'. One example of the use of agitation and propaganda communication strategies in political contestation is the case of blasphemy by

former Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, also known as Ahok. Social media was used as a platform to build and disseminate counter-Ahok discourse, which was continuously produced and consumed by netizens. The upload of video clips on social media resulted in a wave of rejection of Ahok, originating from netizens themselves. These posts influenced hundreds of thousands of people to take to the streets to demand punishment for Ahok's blasphemous remarks about Islam.

The widespread use of agitation and propaganda, supported by new media, began to expand after the introduction of direct legislative and presidential elections (Dunaway & Graber, 2022; Domalewska, 2025). Legislative and presidential elections, held every five years, were conducted directly from the 2004 election to the 2024 election. Since 2004, political parties, represented by legislative candidates at the district/city, provincial, and central levels, have modernized their strategies to adapt to the direct election system. Open and massive political campaigns emerged as a way to garner support from the majority of Indonesians who had the right to vote. Elections in Indonesia have undergone changes since the first general election in 1955, which was held to elect members of the People's Representative Council (DPR) and the Constituent Assembly (Konstituante). The 1955 election was contested by over 30 political parties with the aim of forming the Constituent Assembly and drafting a new Constitution.

Entering the New Order era (1971-1997), elections began to be held every five years: in 1971, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, and 1997. During this era, elections were contested by three permanent parties: the United Development Party (PPP), and the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). However, elections during this era were largely formalistic and less democratic due to strong government control. The next phase was the Reform Era, from 1999 to the present. The 1999 election was the first election after the fall of the New Order era, with 48 political parties participating and a more democratic process. Subsequently, in 2004, the Legislative Election and the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections were held directly by the people.

Political campaigns with diverse electorates require appropriate methods and strategies to effectively convey messages. In this context, optimal communication is crucial for achieving set targets. Communication strategy in politics is a conditional action because it requires prior planning to achieve desired goals. The role of communication in supporting campaign success is achieved through a political communication strategy that encompasses several elements, including leadership and institutionalization, togetherness, and consensus-building during the campaign (Rani, 2019).

The precise implementation of campaign strategies, including all their techniques, impacts the success of new legislative candidates in getting elected, or for incumbent legislative members in getting re-elected for the next term (Martin & Strøm, 2023; Louwense & Van, 2022; Redmond et al., 2025). Data from the 2024 Legislative Election results from the Indonesian General Elections Commission (KPU) shows that many members of the 2019-2024 House of Representatives (DPR RI) or incumbents were not re-elected in the 2024 Legislative Election (Baldwin, 2025). This is despite the fact that the number of DPR RI members for the 2024-2029 period is the highest in history, with 580 members, compared to the previous period of 575.

Of the 580 members of the DPR RI for the 2024-2029 period, 307 members, or 52.9 percent, are incumbents, while the remaining 273 members, or 47.1 percent, are new. The large number of incumbent members of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI) who were not re-elected is noteworthy. Several factors contribute to the failure of many incumbents. In addition to a lack of constituency engagement during office, inefficient communication and campaign strategies are also contributing factors.

Based on this, the author was interested in conducting research on the political campaign of a politician from South Sulawesi, Muhammad Fauzi, an incumbent Golkar Party DPR RI candidate from the South Sulawesi III electoral district in the 2024 Legislative Election. Muhammad Fauzi was an incumbent member of the DPR RI for the 2019-2024 period and was re-elected in the 2024 legislative election for the 2024-2029 term. He is a politician from Aceh who grew up in Jakarta, but he successfully attracted votes from the public in the South Sulawesi III electoral district.

The author was interested in examining the political campaign strategies used to gain votes and public support, ultimately becoming one of the 307 incumbent DPR RI members re-elected in the 2024 legislative election. In addition to these reasons, when Muhammad Fauzi ran for his second term in the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI), his wife, Indah Putri Indriani, was the two-term regent of North Luwu. This relationship was a factor, as Indah Putri Indriani remained the regent of North Luwu during the 2024 legislative election campaign. Furthermore, Muhammad Fauzi, a native of Aceh, successfully defeated several local figures in South Sulawesi. During his first term in office (2019-2024), Muhammad Fauzi was also known as a politician who frequently appeared and dominated the news, especially in South Sulawesi.

This was evident in 2023, when he received an award from the Golkar Media Award 2023 for being one of the most active politicians in the media. In the same year, the Parliamentary Journalists Coordinator (KWP) of the DPR RI also recognized Muhammad Fauzi with an award as a legislator concerned with vehicle access for his frequent outreach on infrastructure in national media outlets. These two awards demonstrate Muhammad Fauzi's active communication role in the mass media during his time as a member of the DPR RI. From initial observations during the campaign, researchers discovered that Muhammad Fauzi employed a political propaganda technique. One of his campaign props featured a photo of North Luwu Regent Indah Putri Indriani, who was still serving as regent during the campaign period. However, the caption for the photo showed Indah Putri Indriani as Chair of the Golkar Party's Regional Representative Council (DPD II) in North Luwu.

The use of this photo demonstrates one of the seven propaganda techniques, namely the transfer technique, mentioned by Harold D. Lasswell (Heryanto, 2013). This technique uses a respected and valued figure, entity, or symbol to associate them with a particular product, idea, or campaign. For example, a popular celebrity is appointed as a product ambassador. This aims to transfer the positive impression of the celebrity to the product. Conversely, this technique can be used to discredit something by associating it with something disliked.

These initial observations further strengthen the researchers' determination to use Muhammad Fauzi's political campaign as a research topic. Even though after being elected as a member of the Indonesian House of Representatives for the 2024-2029 period, Muhammad Fauzi finally decided to resign from his position to compete in the 2024 North Luwu Regional Head Election (Pilkada). However, his success in getting 99,690 votes in the Legislative Election was phenomenal and interesting to be used as a lesson for both incumbent and new legislative members.

Methods

Type and Approach of Research

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The qualitative descriptive approach was chosen because the main objective of this research is to gain a deep understanding of Muhammad Fauzi's political campaign as the research object, rather than to measure or quantify the phenomenon. Descriptive qualitative research allows the researcher to

explore facts in the field holistically and present them in a meaningful narrative. According to Sugiyono (2015), qualitative descriptive methods emphasize the process of data collection, selection of informants, and data analysis while focusing on the meaning contained in social events. The research was carried out in stages to ensure that the data collected is comprehensive. The findings from interviews, observations, and documentation are presented in a descriptive narrative using accessible language, aiming to provide a clear picture of political campaign practices in the South Sulawesi III electoral district. Supporting data such as campaign photos, screenshots from mass media, and social media posts were also used to enrich the information.

Time and Location of Research

The research was conducted over a period of two months, beginning from the issuance of the research permit. The first month focused on data collection through observations, interviews, and documentation, while the second month was dedicated to data processing, analysis, and the preparation of the research report in the form of a thesis, which also included consultation and supervision sessions.

The research location was set in the South Sulawesi III electoral district, which consists of nine areas: Palopo, Luwu, North Luwu, East Luwu, Enrekang, Tana Toraja, North Toraja, Pinrang, and Sidrap. These regions represent the main areas where Muhammad Fauzi carried out his political campaign activities for the 2024 legislative election.

Materials and Tools

Several materials and tools were required to support the research process. The materials consisted of campaign attributes such as speeches, writings, posters, banners, pamphlets, and digital content disseminated through social media. The tools used in this study included notebooks and writing instruments for taking notes, a camera for visual documentation, and a laptop to process and analyze the collected data as well as to prepare the final report.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques are a crucial component of the research process, as the validity and richness of the data determine the quality of the analysis. This study relied primarily on primary data, which were obtained directly from the main sources and events. Three techniques were employed: observation, interviews, and documentation.

First, observation was used to capture a direct understanding of campaign attributes and political communication activities. According to Yusuf (2019), observation is a technique for investigating behaviors or nonverbal activities within a social environment. This study employed non-participant observation because Muhammad Fauzi's campaign had already concluded by the time of the research. Thus, observations were focused on campaign attributes such as billboards, posters, leaflets, social media content, and reports from online and mass media.

Second, interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information through direct interaction with informants. As Yusuf (2019) explains, interviews are communication processes between researchers and respondents aimed at gathering relevant information. This research applied semi-structured planned interviews. While the researcher prepared a set of guiding questions, the structure was flexible, allowing informants to freely share their experiences and perspectives regarding Muhammad Fauzi's campaign activities in the 2024 legislative elections.

Third, documentation was used to complement the findings of interviews and observations. Documentation, according to Yusuf (2019), refers to written, visual, or recorded evidence of social events that serve as a useful source of information in qualitative research. Documents such as campaign photographs, mass media coverage, and archival records were examined to provide additional data and serve as a form of triangulation.

Informants

Informants play a central role in qualitative research as primary data sources. They were selected based on their relevance and involvement in the campaign process. The main informant in this study was Muhammad Fauzi himself, as the direct object of research. The key informant was Min Ansar, a senior aide and campaign team leader who had comprehensive knowledge of the strategies and activities carried out during the campaign.

In addition, two supporting informants were included to provide broader perspectives: Indah Putri Indriani, the Regent of North Luwu (2016–2025) and Chairperson of the Golkar Party's DPD II in North Luwu, who is also Muhammad Fauzi's wife and held a strategic role in the campaign, and Husain, the Chairman of the North Luwu Regional House of Representatives (2025–2030) and a Golkar Party cadre who acted as Muhammad Fauzi's political partner in the 2024 legislative elections. These informants were considered significant because of their involvement and access to key campaign dynamics.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in qualitative research is a systematic process of organizing and interpreting data to generate meaningful findings. The analytical method applied in this study was qualitative analysis, carried out continuously from the data collection phase until the conclusion stage.

The first stage was analysis during data collection through triangulation, which integrated the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure data validity. The second stage was data reduction, in which the researcher selected, coded, and organized relevant information while discarding data that did not align with the research focus. The third stage was data presentation, where information was arranged in narrative form, supported by tables, and complemented with direct quotations from informants. This stage aimed to make the data clearer and more accessible for interpretation.

The final stage was verification or drawing conclusions. Provisional conclusions made during the research process were continuously reviewed and verified until valid and consistent findings were established. This approach ensured that the results of the research provided a detailed, substantive, and accountable description of the campaign dynamics under study.

Results and Discussion

Agitation Communication Strategy

During the 2024 Legislative Election campaign period, M.F. held 173 face-to-face meetings, of which 151 were conducted in North Luwu, while the rest were spread across the other eight regencies and municipalities in South Sulawesi III electoral district. M.F. deliberately allocated a larger portion of his campaign efforts to North Luwu, as he considered it his vote stronghold. Each meeting was attended by between 100 and 500 participants.

“In a legislative election campaign, it is not necessary to cover all regions equally. The vast geographical area and limited reach make it impossible. Therefore, the strategy I used was territorial marking. Marking here means fully focusing on my vote base in North Luwu. Why North Luwu? Because around 80 percent of my constituency development programs have been implemented there. This makes it easier to secure

votes in that area. It is also consistent with the proportion of votes I received in the 2019 election. Since North Luwu was the largest contributor of votes, it deserved more attention. It's about proportion based on previous vote distribution," said M.F. during the interview.

Face-to-face campaigning was considered by M.F. to be the most effective method, as it allowed people to directly see and hear what he had done and planned to do if re-elected. It also enabled direct interaction with him as a candidate. In every meeting, M.F. delivered the same message to his audience, one of which was an appeal to reject transactional politics or vote-buying. He consistently urged people to resist the practice of money politics.

"I always try to remind people not to be tempted by money politics. I tell them, we might get IDR 50,000 to IDR 200,000 once, but are we willing to pawn off our region to someone with a merchant's mentality who will almost certainly not return after being elected because they feel no moral responsibility toward the community? I can say this with confidence because I have proven myself during one full term. If we calculate, I have brought hundreds of billions of rupiah in direct assistance from the central government to the people: from housing renovations of about 1,000 units per year in North Luwu, to bridges, roads, dams, sanitation, and housing assistance after the flash flood. So, people can see what I have done," explained M.F.

According to M.F., the toughest challenge was changing people's mindset that politics is merely an occasion to receive material benefits from candidates. He often encountered this perception during his campaign in the electoral district, especially as some candidates made promises of gifts to secure votes.

"I even used a mathematical analogy in every campaign meeting. I said, for example, if someone accepts IDR 200,000 from a candidate, and that candidate serves for five years, that equals 1,825 days. Dividing 200,000 by 1,825 means the voter's worth is only about IDR 100 per day. Do we really want to be valued that cheaply? I explained this so that people realize how destructive money politics is. And I proved it in North Luwu—there was no money distribution from me during the 2024 election. I still secured more than 72,000 votes without practicing money politics. Of course, there were campaign costs, but those were for team operations only. In my first term, I ensured that every village in North Luwu received a program from the central government through my initiatives. So, people could judge me by my track record," said M.F.

He emphasized that people are often easily swayed by small amounts of money or goods and forget the performance and track record of candidates, especially incumbents.

"For me, incumbents actually have an advantage compared to newcomers at least for those who have worked properly. The people can feel their contributions, which makes re-election easier. The challenge, however, is that money politics often makes people think short-term, which is harmful for incumbents who have served well for five years," said M.F.

M.F. further explained that his campaign aimed not only to maintain his voter base but also to educate people about the dangers of money politics. By encouraging a shift in mindset, he sought to promote rational voting behavior. He stated that this effort was part of his responsibility to provide political education to society. With regard to his persuasive strategy, M.F. described it as a personal calling to invite people to choose rationally, without promises or material incentives.

Propaganda Communication Strategy

During the campaign, M.F. made extensive use of political propaganda practices. This propaganda was expressed through various campaign tools as well as creative campaigns carried out by his team. Campaign materials were installed in accordance with the designated spots and sizes determined by the Regional General Election Commission (KPUD) in each regency/municipality.

The head of M.F.'s campaign team, M.A., stated that the content of campaign materials was usually created and discussed together with the team. This process included choosing photos, developing campaign messages, and determining installation techniques, including the selection of strategic locations.

“The billboards we printed were not all the same. For example, in North Luwu some billboards were printed in pairs with legislative candidates from the Golkar Party at the regency level. There were also campaign tools that only displayed the candidate’s face, such as stickers and business cards. Some special campaign materials also featured photos of the Chair of Golkar’s DPD I in North Luwu, I.P.I. Naturally, as the regent and Golkar chair, she has loyal supporters, and we hoped this would create a domino effect for M.F.,” said M.A., Head of M.F.’s Campaign Team.

According to M.A., it cannot be denied that I.P.I., who still served as the regent and is also M.F.'s wife, could boost support for the candidate. However, M.A. noted that as the Regent of North Luwu, I.P.I. could not officially endorse any one candidate. Still, as his wife and as the Chair of Golkar in North Luwu, she could provide support in ways consistent with campaign regulations for instance, outside of working hours or by taking campaign leave from her position as regent.

According to M.A., campaign materials such as the one shown above were installed at several points in North Luwu. The expectation was that the image of I.P.I. would be associated with support for M.F., who was politically under the Golkar Party. However, these materials were not intended to be installed outside of North Luwu. The use of a figure to be associated with a candidate is a form of political propaganda known as *transfer*. Transfer is one of the seven propaganda techniques introduced by Harold Lasswell.

“This strategy does not violate any rules and is carried out by all Golkar candidates in North Luwu, not only M.F. Legislative candidates at the district or provincial level from North Luwu also displayed the photo of I.P.I., in her capacity as Chair of Golkar in North Luwu,” said M.A.

The Chair of the North Luwu Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) for 2025–2029, H., from Electoral District I (Masamba, Mappedeng, Rampi), stated that some of his campaign materials also featured the photo of I.P.I. and M.F. According to him, almost all Golkar candidates in North Luwu displayed M.F.'s photo on outdoor campaign attributes.

“For indoor attributes such as calendars and stickers, I used the photo of I.P.I. (Chair of Golkar North Luwu). For outdoor attributes like billboards and banners, I displayed the photo of M.F. along with his ballot number. Almost all Golkar candidates in North Luwu did the same. We also hoped to associate ourselves with M.F. so that people would continue to vote for Golkar candidates at all levels,” said H.

H., who served as Chair of the Golkar faction in the North Luwu DPRD during the 2024 campaign, explained that members of the faction independently displayed M.F.'s photo to ensure Golkar votes did not shift to other parties at any level. This strategy was also carried out as a form of mutual symbiosis between district, provincial, and national legislative candidates in terms of support.

I.P.I., when interviewed, confirmed that her photo was displayed on several of M.F.'s campaign materials. She explained that this was indeed an internal policy of the Golkar Party in North Luwu not only for M.F., but for all Golkar candidates in the region, who were permitted to use her photo as a form of party support during the campaign.

“It’s not because M.F. is my husband that he is allowed to use my photo as Chair of Golkar. It’s a party policy, and all Golkar candidates at every level are free to do so. But of course, this is in my capacity as party chair, not as regent. If it were in my role as regent, that would be a violation. I would reprimand it, because election rules prohibit a regent from engaging in practical politics. But I, I.P.I., as a party chair, am allowed. So the boundary is clear,” said I.P.I.

Even so, I.P.I. said she did not take leave to campaign during the 2024 legislative elections. She claimed to focus on her duties as Regent of North Luwu. Regarding instances when she was seen together with M.F. during campaign season, I.P.I. explained that these occasions were usually in her capacity as regent, while M.F. was still serving as a member of the House of Representatives (DPR RI).

M.F. and I.P.I. were seen together on several occasions during the campaign period. For example, in a post on M.F.'s Instagram account dated January 27, 2024, he was accompanied by the Regent of North Luwu to inaugurate a Waste Management Facility (TPS3R) in Pince Pute Village, Malangke District, North Luwu. According to I.P.I., her presence there was as Regent, inaugurating a program initiated by M.F. in his capacity as a DPR RI member. Although it was during campaign season, there was no campaign activity or campaign materials at the event, as it was purely a government function.

“Indeed, during the campaign period I was sometimes seen with M.F., but that was in my capacity as regent and him as a sitting DPR RI member. Since DPR RI members are not required to take leave during campaigns, if the event was part of his duties as a legislator, I attended as regent. But it must be noted, there was no campaign activity and no campaign materials allowed, because it was an official government event,” said I.P.I.

In addition to conventional campaign methods such as limited face-to-face meetings and the distribution of campaign materials, M.F.'s team also carried out creative campaigns to build a positive perception of him. These included developing a tagline, amplifying his track record, organizing competitions, and gaining support from community leaders.

The team chose the phrase “Real Work” (Kerja Nyata) to be associated with M.F. The phrase was selected to portray him as an incumbent legislator who had already proven his dedication and service to the people of South Sulawesi Electoral District III. “Real Work” appeared on all campaign tools and on M.F.'s social media platforms.

According to M.A., the phrase “Real Work” had been introduced long before the 2024 campaign season. He explained that it accurately represented M.F.'s performance, as no previous legislator in the district, particularly in North Luwu, had provided such extensive attention. During his first term, M.F. distributed assistance programs across all villages in North

Luwu, ensuring that every village received at least one program from the central government, with some receiving more than one.

“This achievement is why we attached the tagline ‘Real Work.’ Because it’s the reality. People have experienced it, and the data supports it what M.F. has delivered since becoming a legislator in 2019. That was also our main campaign material during the 2024 election: Real Work that must be continued for the region,” said M.A.

The “Real Work” tagline was also spread through online and social media platforms, supported by digital media coverage in South Sulawesi highlighting M.F.’s performance as a legislator from 2019–2024. This activity demonstrated the use of the propaganda technique known as *glittering generalities* using positive and appealing phrases to generate public support.

In an interview, M.F. said that the assistance programs he initiated as a member of the DPR RI were one of the key aspects that greatly helped during his campaign. Because of this, he did not need to explain too much about what he would do in his second term if re-elected. The community had already seen and directly benefited from his work while in office.

“In every campaign, aside from the issue of money politics, the second thing I always bring up is the track record of the candidate. I always tell the public that when choosing a leader or representative, we must look at their track record. If he is an incumbent, then look at what he has done while in office. Don’t let it be that a candidate only comes back during the campaign. If he is a newcomer, then see how he has been active in the community, whether he has integrity and is worthy to represent our aspirations. This applies at all levels central, provincial, or district,” said M.F.

M.F. also stated that the majority of people are politically aware, as they are able to judge the candidates who truly serve the community.

During the campaign, his team also organized various competitions targeting specific groups such as children, housewives, and sports enthusiasts. These competitions were part of a strategy to engage different communities in South Sulawesi Electoral District III. Although not explicitly framed as campaign events, these competitions became a means of socialization and indirectly shaped the perception of M.F. as someone close to all segments of society.

M.F. explained that the competitions were a routine activity he had conducted since his first DPR RI recess, continuing through the campaign period.

“There’s a unique fact in the Seko area, a district with extremely difficult access. I was reportedly the first DPR RI member to conduct a recess there. Indeed, during my first term (2019–2024), I held my first recess in Seko. While there, I organized many competitions football, volleyball, sepak takraw, cooking contests, and more. So, these competitions have always been part of my routine, combining recess activities with gathering aspirations while holding contests,” said M.F.

One of the most consistent events was the volleyball tournament, the *M.F. Cup IV*, held before the campaign period, featuring teams from across the electoral district. Alongside this, futsal and rounders tournaments were also organized, as well as coloring contests for children.

In addition to promoting his tagline, M.F. also involved community leaders in South Sulawesi Electoral District III to gain public sympathy. In political propaganda, this strategy falls under *testimonial* using the words of respected figures to promote a candidate. One such figure was Tomakaka Masamba, H.A.I., who appeared in a video widely circulated via WhatsApp groups in North Luwu and reposted on M.F.’s official Instagram account. The testimonial expressed gratitude for the installation of 92 street lights along the Masamba city route. The title

Tomakaka refers to a traditional leader or community elder in the local Pattae language. This testimonial was further amplified by M.F.'s campaign team through online media. Support from a respected figure such as Tomakaka Masamba significantly boosted public sympathy for M.F.

M.F. also gained endorsements from local politicians with influence in other areas of South Sulawesi Electoral District III. For example, P., the Chair of Golkar in Luwu, attended campaign events in Luwu and testified to M.F.'s proven track record as a DPR RI member. Similarly, in Enrekang, Golkar politician A.R. expressed support for M.F., highlighting the many programs he had brought to Enrekang during his tenure.

Regarding these testimonials, M.F. said they appeared naturally:

“Honestly, these were not planned. Sometimes I was surprised to see videos like the one from Tomakaka Masamba. But since they had a positive impact, of course, we welcomed them and were grateful. The same goes for the support from fellow politicians in different regions. Usually, because I always involve Golkar colleagues in implementing central government programs, they come forward with their own testimonials,” said M.F.

Campaign Chairman M.A. noted that most of these testimonials emerged organically. Occasionally, people would create videos and send them to M.F. or the local Golkar leadership. The campaign team would then step in to ensure the content was amplified more widely to the public.

Throughout the campaign period set by the KPU, M.F.'s team also maximized the use of mass media and social media. According to M.A., there was no special strategy; all programs were based on habits and discussions with the candidate and the team. For instance, the use of a tagline was intended to serve as a clear marker for M.F., while media campaigns were used to spread information and highlight his previous achievements.

“We did not use a professional political consultant. The team simply worked together based on discussions and our experiences from previous contests like legislative and regional elections. We decided collectively what programs to run, what issues to raise, and which activities like competitions or media outreach would be most effective,” said M.A.

Mass media and social media played a major role in the 2024 campaign. Building a positive image and reaching wide audiences made them central tools for M.F.

In particular, M.F. had long cultivated good relations with journalists in South Sulawesi, even before the campaign began. He regularly took time to meet and discuss with journalists during his recess visits to the constituency. This allowed him to stay updated on local developments and politics.

“Whenever I return for recess, I make sure to go to South Sulawesi. While in Makassar, I always meet journalist friends for discussions. Being in Jakarta, I can't always know what's happening in Sulsel. Through these short discussions, I get updated information, which I can then use when I return to Senayan. I see journalists as strategic partners in my role as a legislator,” said M.F.

Because of this close relationship, M.F. became something of a media darling among DPR RI members from South Sulawesi. He was often the first source local media turned to for comments on issues related to his commission or party. This created a symbiotic relationship:

journalists gained a credible national-level source, while M.F. gained valuable public platforms.

M.F. even organized two journalism competitions with prizes worth tens of millions of rupiah, exclusively for journalists in South Sulawesi. These competitions attracted attention and served as a means of spreading information about his legislative work, since the themes always centered on his performance and political journey. By the time of the 2024 campaign, these relationships ensured that M.F. had no difficulty accessing mass media coverage. He also placed campaign advertisements in several print and online outlets during the election period.

Agitation Communication Strategy

In the context of communication, Arifin (2003:71) discusses agitation as an effort to mobilize the masses through speech or writing, by stimulating and arousing the audience's emotions with the aim of influencing, persuading, and the like. In his campaign, M.F. directly practiced agitation during limited face-to-face meetings at 173 campaign stops. He attempted to raise public awareness in a short time to collectively reject money politics during the legislative elections. M.F. carried out this practice by presenting himself as an example of a member of the House of Representatives (DPR RI) who truly paid attention to his constituency and was capable of making significant contributions to society (Christensen et al., 2022; Havighurst et al., 2023; Gamboa et al., 2024; Eby & Facticeau, 2023). The purpose of M.F. was to encourage society to resist the wrongful habit that has often been normalized in political contests vote buying. In each campaign, he stirred public unease by presenting an example: a legislative candidate may hand out IDR 200,000, which if divided daily over five years amounts to only around IDR 100 per day (Adamu, 2023; Lamont, 2023; Hill, 2024; Skinner, 2024). This, he argued, was insignificant compared to the contributions society could gain if legislators worked properly (Loughlin, 2022; Adamu, 2023; Sheehan, 2023).

As Arifin (2003) states, an agitator is someone who seeks to generate dissatisfaction or anxiety so that society rejects a certain condition. In the context of the anti-money politics campaign, M.F. positioned himself as the agitator to encourage society to resist this harmful practice. This approach was closely tied to M.F.'s goal of safeguarding his electoral base in North Luwu, nurtured through various aspirational programs, from shifting their support due to money politics. As an incumbent relying on his track record, money politics became his primary adversary that could undermine his votes in North Luwu, which served as his political stronghold. Generally, agitation carries a negative connotation, often associated with incitement. For example, Vladimir Lenin, the originator of agitation and propaganda theory, wrote *What is to be done?* which urged society to revolt against social conditions under the Tsarist regime in Russia. However, in its development, agitation is not always negatively connoted. Fittaurina's (2004) research, which aligns with this study's findings, shows that agitation does not solely rely on negative verbal attacks. Some messages are instead delivered with positive nuance or praise, as long as they aim to bring about societal change. In M.F.'s campaign, agitation was employed to awaken public awareness to choose candidates based on their track record rather than money politics. For incumbents, M.F. urged society to evaluate what contributions the candidate had made while in office. For newcomers, he encouraged voters to judge them based on integrity, track record, and commitment while being among the people.

Propaganda Communication Strategy

Harold Lasswell, as cited in Heryanto (2018), identified seven propaganda techniques that use combinations of words, actions, and logic for persuasive purposes. This technique involves the use of positive words to describe something in order to gain support, without examining the

accuracy of the association. The goal is to create positive impressions and evoke favorable emotions in the audience, prompting acceptance of the message without questioning its truth. The research found that M.F. applied this technique through the tagline (“Real Work”). This phrase resonated positively, portraying him as a doer who delivers results rather than just promises. The phrase was then attached to M.F. and framed within the narrative that he had accomplished much for his district in the previous term, making him the right choice for reelection. While not everyone scrutinized the truth of the tagline, his performance as a legislator reinforced its credibility. Ultimately, the public came to associate with his persona, leading to stronger electoral support. This use of glittering generalities is similar to Lubis & Tagor (2022) study, which analyzed Jalaluddin Rakhmat’s propaganda techniques in the 2014 elections in Bandung Regency. He too used grandiose slogans to attract sympathy. (Suryawijaya, 2023; Farida et al., 2022; Asroor & Sahin, 2025; Haris & Bustam, 2024; Bahren, 2025; Sutangga, 2022). In practice, M.F.’s use of glittering generalities was reinforced by the Agenda Setting Theory, which posits that media may not dictate what to think, but they effectively shape what to think about. Online media consistently used in their headlines and news content, amplifying the phrase and embedding it further into M.F.’s public image. This technique associates a person, entity, or symbol that is respected with another figure or campaign. The intent is to transfer the positive impression from one to the other. The study found that M.F. employed this technique by featuring the image of the Regent of North Luwu, who was also the Chair of Golkar Party’s DPD II and his wife. Although the image was used in her capacity as party chair, it created the impression of direct association with M.F. The goal was to leverage her popularity and loyal supporters to extend support to him.

This technique uses statements from respected or disliked figures to promote or discredit someone. It enhances credibility by drawing on the trust audiences place in these figures. In M.F.’s campaign, testimonials came from several influential figures. Among them was *Tomakaka Masamba*, a traditional community leader, who publicly thanked M.F. for securing street lighting assistance from the Ministry of Transportation in Masamba. Similarly, *Patahuddin*, Chair of Golkar Luwu, praised M.F. and urged voters to support him, citing proven performance. Another came from *Arfan Ranggong* in Enrekang, who encouraged voters to support M.F. based on his strong record in advocating for the district’s needs. These testimonials were amplified by online media, exemplifying Two-Step Flow Theory by Paul Lazarsfeld, where opinion leaders filter and transmit messages to the broader public (Ercegovac et al., 2022; O’Boyle, 2022; Salman et al., 2024). This strategy proved effective in shaping voter attitudes through trusted intermediaries. This finding aligns with Sutanto’s study on political propaganda in Indonesia’s 2014 presidential campaign, which found testimonial propaganda to be the dominant form. It showed that communication authority is no longer monopolized by political elites but can also be exercised by respected community figures if crafted effectively (Matos, 2024; Tsulukidze, 2025; Chaturvedi, 2025).

This propaganda technique seeks to create the impression that a candidate shares the same roots and lifestyle as ordinary people, making them relatable and trustworthy (Yeo, 2022; Duan, 2025). M.F. used this technique on social media, where he posted photos of himself shopping for ornamental fish at the market and attending his daughter’s school orientation online. These posts, viewed thousands of times, projected a sense of simplicity and commonality with voters. By showing such everyday activities, he positioned himself as a relatable figure. This strategy fits within the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) by Petty and Cacioppo (1980), particularly the peripheral route, where voters are influenced by surface-level cues such as candidate appearance or relatability rather than rational arguments. This mirrors findings by Kusmanto and Amin in their study on agitation and propaganda in social media, although in their case, social media was used negatively (to spread hate or cyberwar). In contrast, M.F. used it

positively to highlight his simplicity and relatability. In political communication, this technique highlights achievements while ignoring mistakes or controversies. Though often factual, the information is incomplete, presenting only one side. In his campaign, M.F. highlighted his legislative achievements, particularly aspirational programs amounting to hundreds of billions of rupiah. However, the information was incomplete, as 80% of these programs were concentrated in North Luwu. While he sometimes explained this as being due to his support base, it nonetheless became controversial and not fully understood by all voters.

Conclusion

M.F.'s campaign employed agitation communication techniques, particularly during limited face-to-face meetings held at 173 locations in the South Sulawesi III electoral district. This agitation communication was used by M.F. to raise public awareness and quickly influence behavior so that voters would reject money politics and instead choose candidates based on their track record. In his 2024 legislative campaign, M.F. also applied five out of seven propaganda communication techniques proposed by Harold D. Lasswell. These included *Glittering Generalities*, *Transfer*, *Testimonial*, *Plain Folks*, and *Card Stacking*.

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