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Intention to Participate in Presidential Elections in
Indonesia: The Effects of Religiosity and Peer
Reference

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Abstract—This study aims to determine the voting intention in the presidential election in Indonesia. The two variables studied are religiosity and group reference. Data were collected using a questionnaire asking about voting intention, religiosity, and group reference. After being tested for validity and reliability, the data were analyzed using multiple linear regression. Partial test results found that only religiosity had a positive and significant effect on voting intention while group reference had a non-significant positive impact. Simultaneously, these two variables influenced voting intention although the contribution is small, and hence, it is necessary to examine other variables that influence voting intention.

Keywords—Voting Intention, Religiosity, Group Reference

I. INTRODUCTION

Knowing factors influencing voting intention is important. Voting intention has become an issue in many countries because it relates to the success of the election. In Indonesia alone, the implementation of the 2019 elections was horrified by the lack of voting paper. Based on observation from Halim (2019) from Kompas.com, the elections voting papers were 365.443 short in seven provinces: North Sumatra, Riau, West Java, East Nusa Tenggara, West Sulawesi, North Maluku, and Banten. West Java is a region with the most shortage with 210.267 voting papers required, while the smallest shortage was in North Maluku with 471 voting paper shortage. This is probably due to the increasing interest of the people of Indonesia to use their voting rights in 2019. As a result, the absence of this voting paper made some citizens lose their rights to vote for a president.

To be selected as president or legislative, many candidates today are adopting theories from marketing management known as political marketing. The benefits of political marketing are still being debated. Iyer, Yazdanparast, & Struton quoted from Ogilvy (1983) argued that political advertising ought to be stopped because of dishonesty. In addition, other researchers such as Jevons and Carroll (2004) also indicate that political marketing can damage the credibility of the political process and harm marketing practices. The public has experienced excess information both from the candidates and from their parties. Since there is only a little evidence on the impact of political

marketing communication to voter intention, it is important to examine the variables influencing voting intention. In Indonesia today, the issue of religiosity often becomes a trending topic. Started with a statement from a candidate for governor election who offends Muslims, the movement of community religiosity is increasing. Therefore, this study is to examine the effect of religiosity on voting intention. In addition, if marketing communication is no longer effective, the communication originating from the reference group will probably influence voting intentions more. Thus, this study also seeks to examine the impact of group references on voting intention.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Voting Intention

The intention is something that occurs in an individual heart to do something in the future. In the context of political marketing, the intention to vote is interpreted as a tendency in the heart of individuals to elect a candidate in presidential elections. Newman and Sheth (1985) developed a model that described the antecedents of voting intention. There are seven factors that influence voting intention, namely issues and policies; social image; emotional feeling; candidate image; current events; personal events; and epistemic issues. Farrag and Shamma (2013) add other variables such as religious belief, family and friend influence, and the media. More recently, Morar, Venter, and Chuchu (2015) developed a voting intention model which consisted of advertising medium, convenience factor, and social pressure. This research focuses on religiosity and peer reference given the current issue of religion has colored all aspects of people's lives. In addition, the peer reference was chosen because the majority of respondents are young people who are so easily connected with each other to form large friendship circles through information technology.

B. Religiosity

Religion is an important factor in voting behavior. Based on the religion that people hold and believe, voters will look at specific issues such as abortion, homosexuality, the environment, and the economy (Gibbs, 2005). Voters will then base their decisions on these issues in determining

which the candidates are chosen. Therefore, it can be said that religion has a significant influence on voting behavior in presidential elections. Tracing the previous general election in the United States, Cacciatore *et al* (2014) examined the misperception in politics. One in five Americans believes that President Barack Obama is Muslim. Race, political ideology, and "born-again" or evangelical Christian are the main drivers of Obama's misperception. This shows that the religion of the presidential candidate is one of the factors that will determine the voters' decision.

Bradberry's (2016) research results found that religion can be grouped in factors that determine why voters prefer one candidate over another. Other research conducted by Abram, Iversen, and Sokice (2011) states that religious attendance is positively related to voting behavior. Their argument is that going to church is a social activity (in addition to religious activities) where moral issues can be a topic of conversation which is then translated into political issues. Based on the explanation, the first hypothesis in this research is:

H1: Religiosity has a significant positive effect on voting intention

C. Group Reference

Political marketers today face two main problems. First is a condition where voters are no longer interested in hearing any news that comes from the communication of political marketers and they will easily forget it (Hill *et al.*, 2013). Hence, differentiation in the way a marketer communicates a candidate or party to various voter segments is required and comes a challenge in overcoming this problem (Broockman and Green, 2014). The second problem is the ability of marketers to influence voters to their liking. Although voter sometimes pays attention to the message delivered, it is not quite certain that the message will affect his choice.

When a message from a political marketer is no longer effective, the next question is who must send a message to influence the voter's choice. If it is analogous to the process of purchasing goods and services, consumers can obtain information from various sources such as personal sources (friends, family, neighbors), commercial sources (advertising, personal selling, company websites), public sources (media mass, consumer organizations, social media, peer reviews), and experiential sources (testing and using their own products or services). However, from various sources of information, the most effective source of information is the personal source. If commercial sources only provide information, personal sources legitimate or evaluate these products and services (Kotler and Armstrong, 2016). In the context of political marketing, sources of information for voters are almost the same as sources of information for consumers of goods and services, so it can be assumed that personal sources in the form of group references will influence voter intention. According to Bearden and Etzel (1982) the behavior of reference groups will influence people's behavior and decision making. The basis of this conclusion is the premise of the theory of influence of reference groups. Based on this explanation, the second hypothesis in this study is:

H2: Group Reference has a positive and significant effect on voting intention

Based on the aforementioned explanation the model in this study can be seen in Fig. 1

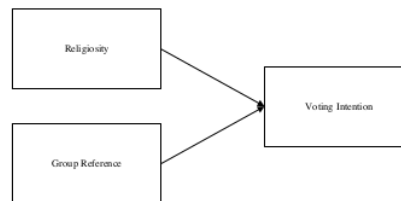


Fig. 1 Proposed Model

III. METHOD

This research was conducted in Pekanbaru City. Respondents were selected by accidental sampling. The questionnaire was compiled from previous studies and it consisted of four parts. First, it asked the demographic data of the respondents. The next three sections measured respondents' perceptions on voting intention, religiosity, and group reference. A total of 142 questionnaires were obtained and used in further analysis. Data were analyzed descriptively to support the findings, tested for validity and reliability, and finally analyzed using multiple linear regression.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The respondents in this study were 40.8% male and 59.2% female with age ranges from 17 to 35 years old and the average age of 20 years. Table 1 below illustrates the descriptive statistics and results of validity and reliability tests.

TABLE 1. Descriptive, Validity, And Reliability Test

Research Construct	Mean	Std Deviation	Pearson Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
VI	4.59	0.87	0.871	0.724
VI2	4.46	0.98	0.901	
RG	4.37	1.01	0.559	0.793
RG2	3.36	1.13	0.789	
RG3	3.38	1.11	0.800	
RG4	2.46	1.14	0.489	
RG5	3.23	1.00	0.771	
RG6	3.13	1.00	0.690	
RG7	3.84	0.94	0.579	
GR	3.45	1.16	0.877	0.697
GR4	3.46	1.15	0.875	

The questions for the group reference initially consisted of four items, but two items did not pass the reliability test, and these two were excluded in the subsequent analysis. The next analysis is multiple linear regression. The results found that religiosity had a positive and significant effect on presidential electives (see Table 2). The descriptive study found that 62.7% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the religiosity of the presidential candidates affected

their voting intentions. Nearly half of the respondents in this study (46.4%) also claimed that the candidate supported by religious scholars (*ulama*) would influence their choices. Another descriptive finding also showed that 87.4%

answered agreed and strongly agreed that it was important for them to choose a party that suited their religion.

TABLE 2. Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients ^a		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	6.747	.683		9.883	.000
Religiosity	.084	.031	.251	2.746	.007
Group Reference	.047	.074		.630	.530

a. Dependent Variable: Voting Intention

Because all presidential candidates are promoted by political parties, the religiosity of presidential candidates is also very important for voters. A more detail graph of respondents' answers can be seen in Figure 2. Other findings of this study are that the reference group does not affect the intention to vote. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Camposset *al.*, (2017) that also found no relationship between political identification of peers and individual identification. Descriptively, the majority of respondents (47.2%) said their choice was not influenced by their friends. Other data revealed that 88.7% respondents had a choice and would not change their minds. This might be the reason why reference group does not affect voting intention. Iyer *et al* (2017) stated that there are five communication channels that can be used in political

marketing, namely face-to-face (F2F), telephone, text, social networking site (SNS) and email. Their results found that young voters preferred to evaluate political messages received through text and SNS (like Facebook). Likewise, for their level of trust, they trust political marketing messages more through text. In this study, most of the respondents are categorized as young age group. For this reason, this study found respondents were also very active in using social media and this is in accordance with Iyer *et al* (2017). With an average value of 3.66, more than half of respondents always look for news using online media. Furthermore, the results of simultaneous test show that the two independent variables namely religiosity and group reference significantly influence voting intention.

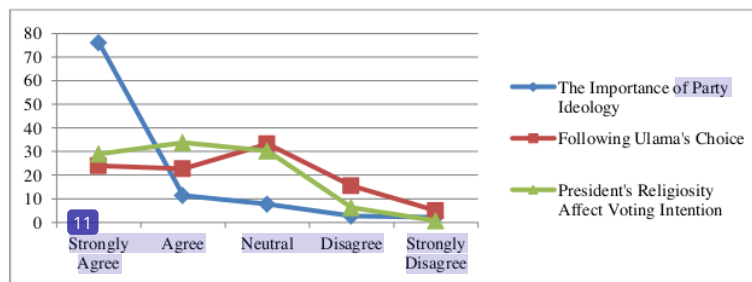


Fig. 2 Respondent Response for Religiosity

TABLE 3. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	30.202	2	15.101	6.028	.003 ^b
Residual	348.228	139	2.505		
Total	378.430	141			

a. Dependent Variable: Voting Intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Religiosity, Group Reference

TABLE 4. MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.283 ^a	.080	.067	1.58279

a. Predictors: (Constant), Religiosity, Group Reference

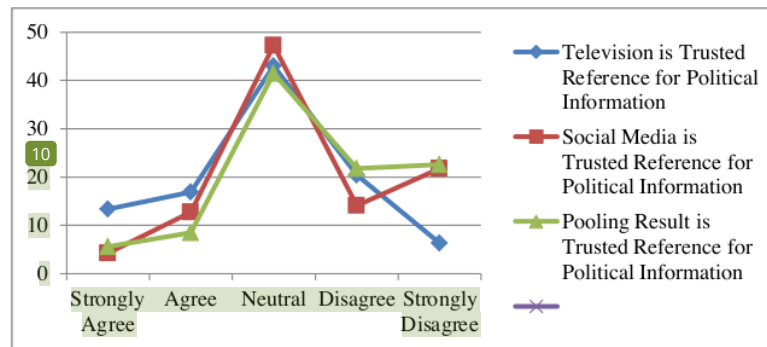


Fig. 3 Respondent's Trusted Reference

Based on the data in Table 3, it can be seen that the influence of religiosity and group reference is only 6.7%. This means that there are still many other variables that can influence voting intention. Yoen et al (2005) in Venter et al stated that advertising has an important influence on voter intention. However, according to Farrag and Shamma (2013) research on the relationship between advertising and voting intention has mixed results. Voting intentions can be higher, lower, or have absolutely no effect. Apathetic people think that there is no point in exercising their right to vote because whoever is elected as a president will not have much impact on their welfare. One of the media used in advertising is television. Morar et al (2015) found that the influence of television media on voting intention was insignificant. Descriptively, this study found that political information sources from television media tended to be more trusted than social media and pooling results (See Fig. 3). The mean value for social media is 2.63; television 3.11, and pooling result 2.53.

V. CONCLUSION

Political marketing will always be practiced throughout the country even though it has drawn some criticism in its implementation. Both candidates and parties will continue to try to win the voice of the people in order to achieve their goals. Creative efforts were designed to win voices from various segments. Along with the changes in people's behavior patterns, communication in political marketing has also changed, although it is not necessarily successful. Indonesia with a Muslim majority country will certainly consider the variable of religiosity. The use of religious attributes and activities related to religion will be a strategy to win the competition. In this study, we find that religiosity has a positive and significant effect on voting intention. However, this study failed to find a relationship between the effect of group reference and voting intention. The influence of friends is apparently unable to make individuals change their attitudes. Only religious scholars

and families are somewhat influencing choices. The magnitude of the influence of religious scholars can be related to the level of individual religiosity itself. The results of this study can still continue to be developed provided many other factors that need to be explored for their effects on voting intention. As a way of individuals in determining attitudes when choosing leaders, voting intention needs to be maintained so that it can be realized into concrete actions.

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