



## Incumbent Failure in the 2018 Riau Governor Election Contest

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain the factors that led to the defeat of incumbent candidate Arsyadjuliandi Rachman-Suyatno in the election of the Governor of Riau in 2018. This empirical fact is interesting to analyze because the incumbent pair is supported by the majority of seats in parliament and Riau is the base area of the Golkar Party. This study uses qualitative research methods using data collection techniques through interviews and document sources such as books, research journals, survey results, and articles in mass media and online media. The results of this study indicate that 4 factors led to the defeat of the incumbent pair in the election of the Governor of Riau in 2018 namely (1) Government performance that is not well socialized; (2) Machinery of political parties that have not worked optimally and effectively; (3) Effect of the ulama; and (4) Political branding of incumbent candidate pairs who are unsuccessful. The conclusion in this study is that candidate figures are important indirect regional head elections, but also a political marketing strategy is needed by carrying out political branding so that the message to be conveyed to voters towards candidate figures is acceptable so that they are ultimately chosen by the voters

### INTRODUCTION

General elections are one of the prerequisites of a democratic country as stated by Dahl that one of the characteristics of a democratic country is that elections are held freely and fairly and with a certain frequency (Crick, 2002). Likewise with Dahl, expressing the key ideas that form the basis of democracy, including the principle of one person, one vote, one value, which reflects a broader concept that everyone has the same values (Beetham, 2005).

One of the General Elections held in Indonesia is the election of Regional Heads and Deputy Regional Heads. In this regard, in 2018 in Indonesia, Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) were held in 17 provinces, 115 regencies and 39 cities. One of the regions that conducts the Regional Head Election is the Riau Province which is held to elect the Governor and Deputy Governor for the 2019-2024 period. The election of the Governor (Pilgub) was followed by 4 pairs of candidates for Governor and Deputy Governor who were determined through the Decree of the General Election Commission (KPU) of Riau Province Number: 73/HK.031-KPT/Prov/II/2018. The candidates for Governor and Deputy Governor of Riau in 2018 can be displayed in the following table 1:

Table 1. Candidates for Governor and Deputy Governor of Riau in 2018

Number	Candidates for Governor and Deputy Governor	Party Bearer	Number of seats in DPRD
1	Syamsuar- Edy Nasution	PAN PKS NASDEM	13
2	Muhamad Lukman Edy-Hardianto	PKB GERINDRA	13
3	Firdaus-Rusli Effendi	DEMOKRAT PPP	14
4	Arsyadjuliandi Rachman-Suyatno	GOLKAR PDI-P HANURA	25

Source: Processed from KPU Riau Province (2018)

The voting in the Riau gubernatorial election was held on 27 June 2018 and the results were that Syamsur and Edy Nasution succeeded in winning the 2018 Riau regional election with a total vote of 799,289 votes or 38.2% of the vote. The Syamsuar-Edy Nasution pair managed to beat the incumbent Arsyadjuliandi Rachman who only received 507,187 votes or 24.2% of the votes. The following are the complete results of the 2018 Riau Gubernatorial.

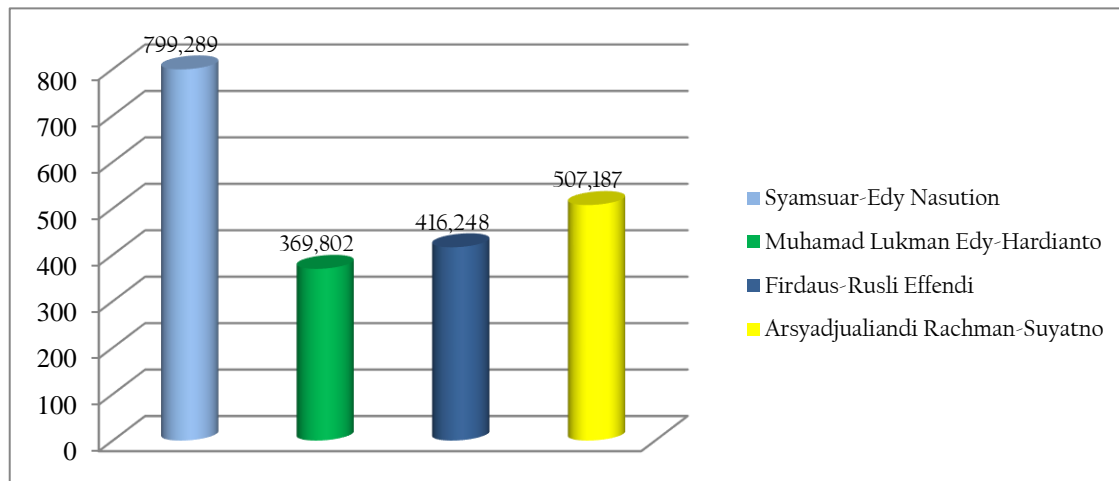


Figure 1: Gaining Votes in the Election of Governor and Deputy Governor of Riau in 2018

Source: Processed from KPU Riau Province (2018)

Based on Figure 1 above, it can be explained that the Syamsuar-Edy Nasution pair received 38.2% of the votes, followed by Arsyadjuliandi Rachman-Suyatno with 24.2%, Firdaus-Rusli Effendi 19.9% and Lukman Edy-Harianto with 17.7% of the votes. The results of the 2018 Riau Pilkada do not match the initial estimate, which is based on a poll conducted by the Indonesian Elections Study Institute which states that the highest level of public acceptance is the Lukman Edy-Harianto pair with 80.3% and the 2nd position is the Syamsuar-Edy Nasution pair 78.2%.

Research on general elections, especially in the local context in Indonesia, has been carried out by scholars with various approaches and perspectives. Some of them are analyses of local elections and democracy (Choi, 2007; Djafar, 2008; Fakhruddin, F., Yuslim, Y., & Syamsurizaldi, 2019; Lay, 2007; dan (Nurprojo, 2016), political marketing and election (Ediraras, D. T., Rahayu, D. A., Natalina, A., & Widya, 2013; (Sandra, 2013); (Saputra, 2014); dan (Utomo, 2013), political participation in elections (Ibrahim, 2017); (Rhoads, 2012); dan (Suaedy, 2014), and discuss voting behavior (Prasetyawan, 2014; Rahim, 2013; dan Rofieq, A., & Nuryono, 2016).

Meanwhile, the study in this study is to analyze the causes of the defeat of the incumbent or incumbent Arsyadjuliandi Rachman in the 2018 Riau Governor Election. Studies on the defeat of the incumbent have indeed been researched as done by (Al Kaisya (2012) and Lestari (2011). However, an interesting phenomenon in the Regional Head Elections in Riau Province that distinguishes it from other regions is that the incumbent who participated in the 2018 Riau Gubernatorial Election contest was supported by the majority of seats in the Riau Provincial DPRD and the winners of the elections in Riau Province were always cadres promoted by the Golkar Party as the party that won the elections in Riau Province. According to (Stonecash, 2008), incumbents have always had a high success rate versus challengers, and now they do even better. However, the empirical phenomenon in Riau Province shows that the advantages possessed by the incumbent, such as access to the bureaucracy, experience, and popularity among the community, are asymmetrical with the election results of the incumbent candidate. In this regard, this study aims to explain and elaborate the factors that led to the defeat of the incumbent Arsyadjuliandi Rachman who was paired with Suyatno in the 2018 Riau Governor and Deputy Governor Elections.

In dissecting the failure of the incumbent in the Riau Pilkada, the researcher uses a political marketing approach which according to Cwalina, Falkowski & Newman (2015) is a process of exchanging, forming, and maintaining relations between objects in the political market, namely politicians, political parties, voters, interest groups and institutions to fulfil their identification and needs in developing political leadership. In this regard, they mentioned the importance of an effective campaign with the right segmentation and position for voters. Furthermore, the other basic thing is the image of the candidate that is tailored to the needs of the electorate.

## METHOD

This study is qualitative research. According to Creswell (2014) qualitative research is intended to explain the meaning and process of a phenomenon. In relation to the context of this study, it is hoped that this qualitative method can reveal the factors of the incumbent's defeat in the 2018 Riau Governor Election. The data in this study are sourced from documents such as books, research journals, reports, survey results, official documents, articles or news in print media and online media. Meanwhile, data were also obtained through interview techniques with several political figures, academics, and the winning team for the candidate for governor. Determination of resource persons or informants in this study was carried out using purposive and snowball techniques. The data that has been collected in this study is then analyzed using qualitative analysis and is interpreted and explained with relevant theories (John W. Creswell, 2014)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The defeat of the pair Arsyadjuliandi Rachman and Suyatno in the Riau Governor Election in 2018 was beyond the expectations of many parties. This cannot be separated from the support of the majority of seats in the DPRD Riau Province and the Golkar party as the party that dominated the legislative elections in 2014 by winning 14 seats and also successfully winning the pairs of candidates it supported in the gubernatorial elections in 2008 and 2013. is the basis of the Golkar Party and for 40 years has dominated elections in Riau. However, the resources and profits obtained by the incumbent cannot "deliver" him back to sit as Governor of Riau. Several

factors caused the incumbent's defeat in the Riau gubernatorial election in 2018 as follows:

### *Government Performance That Is Not Well Socialized to Voters*

Before becoming Governor of Riau in 2016, Arsyadjuliandi Rachman (Andi Rachman) was the Deputy Governor of Riau who was elected along with Annas Maamun in the 2013 gubernatorial election of Riau. Therefore, the Minister of Home Affairs appointed Arsyadjuliandi Rachman as Acting Governor in 2014, and finally became the definitive Governor in 2016. One of the advantages of the incumbent is that he has work experience and knows every problem that exists in his area. However, this advantage was not successfully utilized to influence the sympathy and voice of the people. Some of the achievements claimed by the Riau Provincial government, namely Riau Province, obtained the fifth position of Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) in Indonesia and number one on the island of Sumatra. Riau's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) in 2016 contributed 5.32% to the national and Riau's GRDP was in the top five in Indonesia and was the largest in Sumatra where the total contribution of Sumatra to Indonesia was 22.23% and 5.32% of the contribution came from the province of Riau (Gebby Fadhila Sari, 2017).

Apart from that, in terms of the policy during the leadership of Arsyadjuliandi Rachman, he has succeeded in resolving the spatial problems of Riau Province which have not been resolved for a long time. The Riau Province Regional Spatial Plan (RTRW) policy in 2018 has finally been ratified after waiting more than 30 years. The absence of this RTRW policy has disrupted the development climate and created legal uncertainty over the allocation of areas in Riau Province.

This is an extraordinary achievement that the previous leader could not do, despite all the pros and cons of the substance of the RTRW policy. Meanwhile, an equally complex problem that was successfully minimized during the reign of Arsyadjuliandi Rachman was the decrease in the intensity of land and forest fires (karlahut). Land and forest fires are among the crucial issues that the Arsyadjulian di Rachman government has successfully handled by taking strategic steps by implementing the action plan to prevent forest fires as stated in the Governor's Regulation No. 5 of 2015. Thanks to the hard work of the Riau provincial government, the Karlahut task force, and the assistance of all parties, in 2016 and 2017, the Riau Provincial Government managed to get a forest fire appreciation award from the government in 2018 and was awarded forest fires in 2018.

All of the work achievements of the incumbent in overcoming crucial issues in Riau Province, cannot be conveyed properly to the voting public. More people feel the absence of the provincial government in overcoming existing problems. This is supported by the results of a survey from Indo Barometer in 2017 showing that 43.9% of the people of Riau were dissatisfied with the performance of the Arsyadjulian di Rachman government and only 40.8% were satisfied, while 15.4% said they did not know or did not answer (Maurit Simanungkalit, 2017).

### *Political Party Machines That Have Not Worked Optimally and Effectively*

Political parties have an important role in democratic life by recruiting leaders who will be nominated to become public officials (Gauja, 2016). Therefore, the role of political parties is to fill political positions by winning elections both on a national and local scale. In the context of the Riau Pilkada, the incumbent pair is supported by the ruling party, Golkar, and other major parties, namely PDI-P and Hanura. These political parties have networks up to the village level, so they are expected to directly meet with the community to absorb aspirations, and conduct socialization and political education in the community.

However, in the context of the 2018 Riau gubernatorial election, the political party machine could not work optimally and effectively because the support from Golkar party cadres and sympathizers did not fully flow to the incumbent pair. This is because one of the best cadres of the Golkar Party also participated in the 2018 gubernatorial election contest, namely Syamsuar. Before being supported as a candidate for Governor of Riau by PAN, PKS, and NASDEM, Syamsuar was a senior cadre from the Golkar Party and had served as Chairman of the Regional Leadership Council (DPD) II of the Siak Golkar Party from 2013 to 2018.

Furthermore, there was also internal friction within the Golkar Party in determining who would be promoted in the 2018 Riau gubernatorial election. Apart from Arsyadjuliandi Rachman, a popular Golkar Party cadre who has strong resources is the Regent of Pelalawan, namely Muhammad Harris. The Golkar Party's internal DPP survey conducted by credible research institutions such as Indo Barometer in 2017 showed that the incumbent's electability was still below H.M. Harris and Lukman Edy who are not from the Golkar Party (Chaidir Anwar Tanjung, 2017). The internal conflict within Golkar intensified when M. Haris was not elected by the Golkar Party as a candidate for governor, and subsequently asked Arsyadjulian di Rachman for permission and the Golkar Party DPP to continue to run as a candidate for Governor of Riau using another party, although M. Harris, in the end, did not receive a recommendation from any party (Alexander, 2017).

Therefore, in the context of direct regional elections, political parties have a strategic function in conducting campaigns against candidate pairs who are supported by continuously increasing their electability. However, the political parties that support the incumbent are still half-hearted in their efforts to win the candidate. Support from Golkar Party cadres is divided in carrying out their support for the 2018 Riau Gubernatorial Election. A senior figure from the Golkar party, Syamsuar, who participated in running for the 2018 Riau gubernatorial election, made it difficult for the party's internal consolidation to win the incumbent pair. The performance of Syamsuar's winning team is more intensive in conducting outreach by using a door-to-door mechanism to greet and interact with the community. The parties supporting Syamsuar-Edy, namely PAN, PKS, and Nasdem, known as the United Riau Coalition, formed volunteers in each region and carried out a dialogical campaign, and also used social media. This party machine helped the Syamsuar-Edy pair in getting votes in the 2018 gubernatorial election.

### *The Influence of Ulama In the Election of The Governor of Riau*

Ulama or kyai in the context of politics and elections in Indonesia have been so entrenched, especially in areas on the island of Java (see research (Hamid, 2013); (Priambodo, 2019); and (Wafa, 2012). Ulama for Syamsuar and Edy Nasution have been able to become influencers (Nursal, 2004) stated that the involvement of influential figures such as ulama or kyai is a form of political marketing strategy called pass political marketing. This strategy is very effective to help the Syamsuar-Edy Nasution pair in winning the contest because the influence, charisma, and role model of ulama or kyai in Riau Province are still the basis for the community to determine their choice.

The influence and role of the ulama in Riau Province have also strengthened, one of which is caused by the impact of the "212" movement. Psychologically, the "212" movement based in Jakarta also influences people's choices in choosing leaders. As one of the effective campaigns by the ulama is not to choose a leader who is supported by a party that supports Islamic religious blasphemers. This also applies in Riau Province, which incidentally is very religious and Islamic. The party that has attached itself to supporting Ahok as a defendant in blasphemy against Islam is PDI-P which supports the incumbent pair in the 2018 Riau gubernatorial election. The community's spontaneous reaction was seen when Andi Rachman received PDI-P's recommendation to run as a candidate for Governor of Riau by crowding his rejection of the candidate promoted by the religious blasphemer (Rodzi supporters party, 2017). The support of the ulama who have great influence in Riau Province flows to competitors from the incumbent pair, namely Syamsuar and Edy Nasution. This support was obtained from Kyai and religious leaders in districts/cities in Riau Province. The support of these scholars is so strong because the vision of Syamsuar-Edy Nasution is to create a religious society. This condition has quite a big influence on people's choices in Riau Province which is famous for being religious and Islamic (H Dheni Kurnia, 2018).

Meanwhile, the approach taken by the incumbent couple towards ulama and kyai in Riau Province is still lacking compared to that of Syamsuar and Edy Nasution. A dialogue campaign with the kyai was also carried out by the pair Syamsuar and Edy Nasution, thus getting a lot of support from the ulama and kyai in Riau. The attraction of the Syamsuar pair concerning building Islamic values is to provide scholarships to students from Siak to study Islam in Egypt and study evening activities. Then the popular policy is the Regional Regulation on Zakat which was enforced in Siak Regency and has received recognition from various parties because it was successfully carried out. Therefore, this zakat policy will be adopted as a provincial-level policy that is a priority for Syamsuar-Edy in developing religion in Riau. This commitment to the religious sector is not shared by the incumbent couple so they do not get support from the ulama and kyai in Riau Province.

### *Political Branding of Unsuccessful Incumbent Candidate Pairs*

In the era of direct local elections as it is today, the figure of prospective public officials is very decisive in influencing people's choices. This will later become part of the campaign strategy in political marketing. According to Butler & Collins in (Firmansyah, 2008) Political marketing is a permanent concept that must be carried out continuously by a political party or

contestant in building public trust and image. Furthermore, according to (Nedham, C. & Smith, 2015) In political marketing, the term political branding is known, meaning a strategy to introduce figures or candidates and parties to voters by first analyzing the position or wishes of the voters. Political branding also requires good and effective communication with text, visuals, and videos, by utilizing mass media or print media, electronic media, and even social media. For example, in the campaign, by providing knowledge to the voting public regarding the achievements of the Syamsuar-Edy pair. Syamsuar was the Regent of Siak for 2 terms and had succeeded in leading the area and added the support of Edy Natar Nasution who had a disciplined and accomplished military background. This combination has become an effective campaign material in capturing the voices of the voting community.

About the figures of each candidate in the 2018 Riau gubernatorial election, they are figures who are popular in the community. However, popularity does not guarantee that the character has high electability as well. Therefore, a planned, massive, and systematic political branding is needed so that the voters make their choice against the candidate. This is what the incumbent pair along with their supporting political parties and their winning team failed to play. The message that the incumbent couple wants to convey to the people of Riau is an experienced and nationalist leader. Arsyad Juliandi Rachman was the Governor of Riau, while Suyatno was the Regent of Rokan Hilir. However, this branding does not have much influence in gaining votes from the voters because it is not following the local context and national settings that occur. In the local context, the government's performance or track record of the incumbent according to the community's view is not successful. The defeat of the incumbent almost occurred in all regencies/cities in Riau Province, only 1 area was controlled by the incumbent candidate, namely Indragiri Hulu Regency. Meanwhile, the pair Syamsuar and Edy Nasution managed to win votes in 9 districts/cities, namely Pekanbaru City, Rokan Hulu Regency, Rokan Hilir Regency, Dumai City, Bengkalis Regency, Meranti Islands Regency, Siak Regency, Pelalawan Regency, and Kuantan Singingi Regency. Furthermore, Kampar Regency was won by the pair Firdaus-Rusli Effendi, and Indragiri Hilir Regency was won by Lukman Edy-Hardianto.

The political branding of the incumbent has failed to attract the sympathy of the people who are more intelligent in choosing a leader. This can be seen from the fact that the poverty line in Riau Province continues to increase from 2013 to 2017 (BPS Provinsi Riau, 2018). The economic difficulties felt by the people of Riau made the branding that the incumbent couple tried to market unacceptable to the public. The public has been able to assess the empirical facts that have occurred in the economic sector. Ideally, the branding that is carried out is to explain efforts to overcome the level of poverty with assistance programs and labor-intensive programs.

Meanwhile, there was an error in choosing a political communication strategy in the campaign. Campaign as a form of political communication carried out by incumbent candidates uses more open campaign methods. This is in contrast to the campaign and political communication methods used by the winner of the Riau Governor Election Syamsuar-Edy Nasution who combined open campaigning, dialogue, and campaigning with a door-to-door system. The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) used this door-to-door system to win Syamsuar-Edy Nasution

and it turned out to be effective in influencing the voters' choice (Unik Susanti, 2018). It is this political communication strategy that distinguishes the two in the 2018 Pilkada contestation.

Furthermore, the branding that the incumbent is trying to carry is a nationalist leader by protecting all cultures and cultures in Riau society. However, once again this branding failed to be sold because the sociological voters also in fact still exist in Riau Province by looking at the background or figure of the incumbent Arsyadjulian di Rachman who is considered not to represent the original Riau people or the sons of the region. This condition indicates that the issue of the son of the region is still relevant in the context of the election of regional heads in Riau because the social base of the community is dominated by Malay culture. However, that does not mean that the Malay community does not value plurality because the Riau Malay community has always been very harmonious and lives in peace with other ethnic groups in Riau Province. A concept that supports this is the existence of a Malay teaching guide made by Tenas Effendy to teach about tolerance, namely "what is the sign of Malay luck, love does not choose a nation." This means that the Malay community highly values diversity and tolerance

On the other hand, the Islamic religious branding attached to the pair Syamsuar and Edy Nasution has a significant effect on people's choices. This religious branding is not only described in the personality of this couple but is also stated in the vision and mission which is the material of the Syamsuar-Edy couple's campaign which emphasizes the importance of human resources who believe in religious development. This is a factor that the incumbent couple does not have in offering a vision and mission to the voting public.

## CONCLUSION

The defeat of incumbent Arsyadjulian di Rachman who was paired with Suyatno was beyond the expectations of many parties. The support of the ruling party in Riau Province and historically the elections that are always won by candidates supported by the Golkar Party are strong instruments for the incumbent in dealing with the 2018 Riau gubernatorial election contestation. Several factors caused the incumbent's failure in the 2018 Riau gubernatorial election, namely the performance of the government that was not well socialized to voters, the political party machine that had not worked optimally and effectively, the influence of ulama, and the failure of political marketing, namely political branding from the incumbent figure. These four factors are inseparable units and contributed to the defeat of the incumbent in the General Elections in Riau.

Meanwhile, the contribution of the incumbent's defeat was also caused by the pair Syamsuar and Edy Nasution as winners of the 2018 Riau gubernatorial election who were able to take advantage of the weaknesses of the incumbents and exploit them with effective political marketing strategies to attract the sympathy and votes of voters in Riau Province. This shows that apart from the candidate or candidate figure participating in the regional head election contestation in this era of direct elections, political marketing is needed as a strategy for winning the General Election.

Meanwhile, the limitation of this research is that it has not explained the political forces that contributed to the failure of the incumbent such as civil society organizations, intellectuals, media, businessmen, and the bureaucracy. Therefore, it can be recommended for further research, to be able to analyze the

factors of political power in winning the election.

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