THE BANDWAGON EFFECT OF A SIMPLE CANDIDATE PREFERENCE MODEL AS A MODEL OF POLITICAL EDUCATION COMMUNICATION

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Kata Kunci:	ABSTRAK
Model Preferensi; Pendidikan Politik Kata Kunci; Komunikasi	**Tujuan:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh model strategi komunikasi politik, yakni bandwagon effect, expected utility, dan simple candidate preferences secara parsial terhadap keputusan memilih para pemilih (voters), serta menganalisis persamaan dan perbedaann efektivitas implementasi model strategi komunikasi politik tersebut di antara ketiga paslon. **Metode:** Pendekatan penelitian adalah kuantitatif. Populasi adalah generasi milenial warga Negara Indonesia (WNI) yang terdaftar pada Daftar Pemilih Tetap (DPT) di Provinsi DKI Jakarta yang memiliki karakteristik sebagai generasi milineal, melakukan pencoblosan pada pilpres pada 14 Februari 2024, dan sebelum hari pencoblosan berkesempatan mengikuti komunikasi politik ketiga paslon plipres tersebut melalui platform media sosial. Teknik sampling adalah purposive sampling. Teknik pengumpulan data sekunder melalui study desk, sedangkan teknik pengumpulan data primer melalui metode survei dan wawancara. Teknik analisis data menggunakan Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS). **Hasil:** Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa model preferensi kandidat sederhana memiliki pengaruh signifikan dalam membentuk pilihan politik masyarakat melalui mekanisme imitasi sosial dan persepsi popularitas kandidat. **Kesimpulan:** Efek ikut-ikutan yang muncul dapat meningkatkan partisipasi politik dan kesadaran akan proses demokrasi, namun juga berpotensi menurunkan kualitas rasionalitas politik apabila tidak diimbangi dengan pendidikan politik yang kritis.

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Keywords:	ABSTRACTS
Preference Model; Political Education keyword; Communication	**Purpose:** This study aims to analyze the influence of political communication strategy models, namely the bandwagon effect, expected utility, and simple candidate preferences partially on voters' voting decisions, as well as to analyze the similarities and differences in the effectiveness of implementing these political communication strategy models among the three candidate pairs. **Method:** The research approach is quantitative. The population is the millennial generation of Indonesian citizens (WNI) registered on the Permanent Voter List (DPT) in DKI Jakarta Province who have characteristics as millennials, voted in the presidential election on February 14, 2024, and before the election day had the opportunity to participate in the political communication of the three presidential candidates through social media platforms. The sampling technique is purposive sampling. Secondary data collection techniques through study desks, while primary data collection techniques through survey and interview methods. The data analysis technique uses Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS). **Result:** The results of the study indicate that the simple candidate preference model has a significant influence in shaping people's political choices through social imitation mechanisms and perceptions of candidate popularity. **Conclusion:** The bandwagon effect that emerges can increase political participation and awareness of the democratic process, but also has the potential to reduce the quality of political rationality if it is not balanced with critical political education.

A. INTRODUCTION

This study aims to evaluate the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia from the aspect of political communication, especially political propaganda. Political propaganda is an attempt to communicate politics to influence the opinions and behaviors of the audience (Johnson 2016). Propaganda content can vary, which in this study is chosen propaganda content which is assumed to utilize three models of decision to choose voters in an election. The three models of voter behavior are the bandwagon effect, expected utility, and simple candidate preference model (Jones, Brewer, and Young 2016).

Viewed from the perspective of political communication, the running of the propaganda mechanism by utilizing three voter behaviors, in this study uses the political communication model of McNair (Haerul et al. 2021). This is considering that the political communication model of McNair views the relationship between communicators (political actors) and citizens (communicators) and mass media (medium), so that it can be understood why these three voter behaviors (communicators) can be used as material or message issues in political communication (Chen 2022).

In this study, it is assumed that the three types of communicator behaviors (bandwagon effect, expected utility, and simple candidate preference model) will be used as material or issues in the political messages of political communicators of the three presidential/vice presidential candidate pairs in the 2024 presidential election (Jain et al. 2023). Communicators make the communicator's behavior an issue/metric in the communicator's political message, so that their communication is effective, that is, the communicator finally makes the decision to vote for the presidential candidate/vice presidential pair they support (T.B. Nazarova 2023). In connection with

the 2024 presidential election, the three models of voter behavior are used as part of a political communication strategy (Cassell 2023).

The first model is the bandwagon effect. This model suggests that opinions about a candidate's chances of being nominated directly influence voter preferences (Boto-García and Baños-Pino 2022). Voters tend to favor the candidate most likely to win the election because being on the winning side is more enjoyable than being on the losing side (Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko 2022).

Chatterjee and Kamal illustrate the bandwagon effect in relation to various types of surveys, such as exit polls. Exit polls, or other surveys related to legislative elections (pileg) and presidential elections (pilpres), are intended to predict the actual election results (Chatterjee and Kamal 2021). However, these polls have historically been controversial, particularly for multiphase elections (elections involving more than one round), because their results can influence voter behavior in subsequent voting rounds (Jennings, Kartapanis, and Yu 2021). If voters subsequently prefer the candidate predicted to be the frontrunner (the potential winner), this effect is known as bandwagon voting. Conversely, if they prefer the candidate predicted to be behind, this phenomenon is known as underdog voting (Barnfield 2020).

The second model as a basis for considering voters' decisions in choosing politicians is the model expected utility (Brito 2023). This model is more suitable for rational voters, stating that voters consider their electability and their assessment of the candidate in making a choice (Piermont 2022). The underlying assumption of this model is that primary voters are rational actors who seek to maximize their expected utility. A candidate's evaluation, in this model, represents a voter's assessment of the benefits they would derive if the candidate were elected president (Chiu, Wong, and Zhao 2018)

The third model as the basis for considering voters' decisions in choosing politicians is the simple candidate preference model. According to this model, opinions regarding the chances of nomination and the electability of candidates do not affect voter preferences. Candidates are selected based on the results of their evaluation in assessing the most positive candidates (Liu et al. 2021). Voters also assume that the best candidate is likely to win both the nomination and electability. In this model, the results of previous primaries and caucuses as well as media coverage of these results are only important if they affect voters' evaluation of candidates (Alaminos-Fernández, García, and Santacreu-Fernández 2024).

The relevance of the bandwagon effect is growing stronger with the pragmatic and instantaneous nature of today's political society. Complex political information is often embedded in slogans, short video clips, visual symbols, or emotional narratives that are easily digested and distributed. In situations like this, the public especially first-time voters and groups with limited political literacy is more susceptible to forming political choices based on what is perceived as "popular" or "widely supported." As a result, political choices develop as a result of social conformity, rather than critical reflection on the substance of public policy (Sazali et al. 2023).

This is because the millennial generation is a generation that is in the middle of the five generations, which in addition to being the current generation is quite socialized with social media and has involvement in it, but also the millennial generation still has closeness and more or less still communicates with the generation above it (especially the G/Gen X generation) (Kholisoh et al. 2019). The millennial

generation in question is those who are registered in the permanent voter list (DPT) in DKI Jakarta Province (Kholisoh and Mahmudah 2020).

It is in this context that political education becomes crucial and relevant. Political education is no longer simply understood as the delivery of procedural information regarding elections or the government system, but rather must function as a process of fostering critical citizen awareness. Effective political education can equip the public with political literacy, media literacy, and the ability to analyze persuasive and manipulative political communication messages. Thus, the public is not merely a passive consumer of public opinion but is empowered to position themselves as conscious, rational, and responsible political subjects (Steyn 2022).

Amidst the powerful bandwagon effect, political education serves as a balancing instrument, guiding the simplification of political messages to maintain educational value. A simple candidate preference model, when integrated with reflective political education, can provide an initial entry point for the public to learn about politics without losing its depth of meaning. Political education serves to broaden public understanding beyond simply "who's popular" to "why this candidate is worthy of being elected," by emphasizing track records, work programs, integrity, and the impact of policies on the community (De Bruycker and Rooduijn 2021).

Testing the influence of these three models on voting decisions in the 2024 Indonesian presidential election is significant, given that previous studies have shown varying perspectives and results, particularly regarding the impact of the bandwagon effect model (Zhang 2020). Study concluded that online preliminary vote counts contributed to a seven percent increase in the bandwagon effect (Farjam 2021). Study showed that all three models had an equal influence on choice, with the expected utility model appearing more dominant (Darr and Stiles 2022). The implications of this bandwagon effect on electability are evident in Chatterjee & Kamal's (2020) study. When exit poll results are banned in multi-stage elections, voters tend to choose the underdog. This means the bandwagon effect does not apply when exit poll results are not published .

The fact that the bandwagon effect is not always consistent is reinforced by other research (Nadroo, Lim, and Naqshbandi 2024). Found that the bandwagon effect is indeed unbiased, but sometimes inconsistent, often causing problems (Niesiobędzka 2018). This inconsistency is also evident in Garcia & Fino's (2022) study, which found that participation influences the effectiveness of the bandwagon effect. Furthermore, the bandwagon effect is considered heterogeneous across countries (Lee, Atkinson, and Sung 2022).

Another study, by Lim et al. (2021), attempted to control for the influence of the bandwagon effect on voters using the conscientiousness and extroversion dimensions of the Big Five personality traits (Knyazev and Oosterhuis 2022). The results showed that low conscientiousness was unaffected by the bandwagon effect. In terms of extroversion, introverted voters were less affected than extroverted voters. In this regard, the research analyzed two opposing effects the bandwagon effect and the underdog effect (favoring the candidate predicted to lose) (Eastman and Iyer 2023).

B. METHOD

The contents of the study method are data collection techniques, data sources, methods of data analysis, correlation tests, and so on, written in Constantia 12 font. This chapter can also include scientific formulas for data analysis/correlation tests.

In an effort to answer the three research questions, the model in this study refers to the research of Abramowitz, (1989) which compares the influence of three models of political communication strategies (model Bandwagon effecttype expected utility, and models simple candidate preference) against Choice or voter decision (Voters) to select a candidate (decision to vote). The difference between the Abramowitz model and this study is in terms of deepening the communicator (Citizen) who are made as respondents. Abramowitz compared respondents ideologically and politically visionary, namely respondents who were Democratic Party loyalists and Republican Party loyalists

The sample in this study was calculated with the assumption of an Alpha value of 0.05 (5%), which resulted in the Z value being 1.96, and the magnitude of the error (E) being 4, as assumed by Zikmund et al.; then the calculation of the number of samples is as follows

$$n = \left(\frac{ZS}{E}\right)^2 = \left(\frac{(1.96)(29)}{4}\right)^2 = \left(\frac{56.84}{4}\right)^2 = 14.21^2 = 202$$
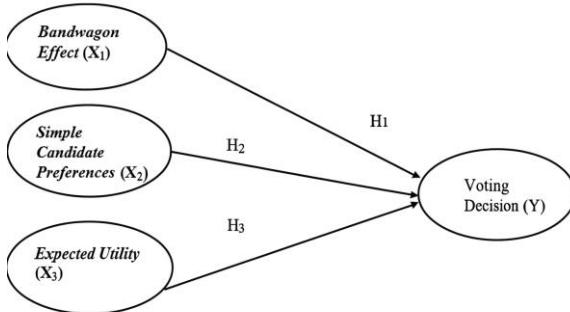

Figure 1 Proposed Research Model

The approach of this research is a quantitative approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study chose surveys as a type, or design, or approach, or research strategy (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The research population is a collection of analysis units, namely A Indonesian citizens whose names are included in the DPT for the 2024 election, especially the 2024 presidential election, and also vote at the polling station, who before voting followed/knew directly political communication messages during the campaign period or before, especially through social media including the accounts of the third pair of candidates (paslon), namely the Amin candidate (Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar). Pragi (Prabowo-Gibran), and Gama (Ganjar-Machfud).

The number of samples in this study isReferring to the results of the calculation, the minimum sample was 202 participants. This means that the sample acquisition in the study implementation can exceed the minimum number of samples. The sample technique in this study uses Probability sampling, in this case purposive sampling, was chosen as the sampling technique in this study.

Variable operationalization, Bandwagon effect contains three dimensions (adjustment, status searching, and influence of others) detailed into 10 indicators (Schmitt-Beck, 160: 2015); encyclopedia British (161: 2025), and Highhouse et al (162: 2016). Variable operationalization simple candidate preference sourced from Robert et al (166: 2008), and Alsamydai and Al Khasawneh (167: 2013). The operation of these variables is divided into five dimensions (personality attributes, political background of the candidate, candidate credibility, contact and communication, and election campaign management) and 24 indicators. Variable operationalization expected utility sourced from Tufte in Suyoto & Adrison (168: 2020), Alsamydai and Al Khasawneh (169: 2013), and Tanjung (170: 2016). The operation of this variable is divided into three dimensions (budget, economic conditions, program benefits) and nine indicators. Meanwhile, the operationalization of the variable of the decision to choose is sourced from Kotler (174: 2003). The operation of this variable is divided into five dimensions (problem recognition, information search, evaluation alternatives, choice intention, and decision to choose) and 12 indicators.

The survey data was measured using an ordinal scale, in this case (Likert scale 1-5 (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Meanwhile, descriptive and verifiable analysis techniques were used in this study. SPSS version 24 was used for descriptive analysis using the ordinary least square (OLS) technique with the help of the SPSS lunask device vesi 24. Meanwhile, the inferential analysis in this study uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) or Structural Equation Model. The SEM method used is Partial Least Squares (PLS)-Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).
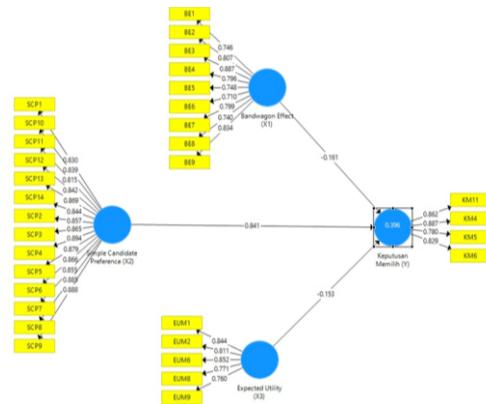
Figure 2 final calculation

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Respondent profile and Variable description

Research involves 231 Respondents which is Millennials (ages 28–43) and recorded in DPT 2024 Election at Jakarta. (i) Gender: Men 53.7%, women 46.3%. (ii) Age: The majority were 33–37 years old (44.6%), followed by 28–32 years old (30.7%), and 38–43 years old (24.7%). (iii) Education: The most ≤ high school (48.48%), followed by D3 (27.70%), S1 (12.98%), S2 (8.60%), and S3 (2.16%). (iv) Work: Private employees 33.33%, housewives 22.51%, unemployed 21.21%, self-employed 13.85%, and civil servants 9.09%. The respondent profile of this millennial group is that the majority of respondents are privately educated workers with a relatively balanced gender distribution.

Descriptive analysis used a Likert scale of 1–5 with an interval of 0.80. The Bandwagon Effect (BE) variable has an average value of 3.8996 with a staggered deviation of 1.0673 (meaning low data deviation). The Simple Candidate Preference (SCP) variable has an average value of 3.9737 with a standard deviation of 1.0310 (meaning low data deviation). The Expected Utility Model (EUM) variable has an average value of 4.1150 with a standard deviation of 0.9360 (meaning low data deviation). Summarized, all variables show the categories of "agree" to "strongly agree" as well as low data deviations, indicating the consistency of respondents' answers.

The influence of three communication strategy models

The results of the study show that the influence of the Badwagon Effect (BE) on the Voting Decision (KM) of the millennial generation in DKI Jakarta in the 2024 Presidential Election shows an influence coefficient value of 0.561 (56.1%), a calculated t-value of 4.870 (critical t> 1.96), and a p-value of 0.005 (> alpha 0.05). This means that BE has a positive and significant effect on KM, with a "moderate" power of influence. The results of this study can be interpreted that an increase of 1 unit of bandwagon effect increases the decision to choose by 56.1%. This means that the stronger the trend of mass support, the higher the tendency of the millennial generation to vote for popular candidates.

The influence of Expected Utility (EU) on the Voting Decision (KM) of the millennial generation in DKI Jakarta in the 2024 Presidential Election shows an influence coefficient value of 0.453 (45.3%), a calculated t-value of 2.530 (critical t> 1.96), a p value of 0.007 (> alpha 0.05). This means that the EU has a positive and significant influence on KM, with a "moderate" influence force. The results of this study can be interpreted that an increase of 1 unit of bandwagon effect increases the decision to choose by 45.3%. This means that the greater the perception of the candidate's benefits, the higher the millennial generation's decision to vote.

The effect of Simple Candidate Preference (SCP) on the Voting Decision (KM) of the millennial generation in DKI Jakarta in the 2024 Presidential Election showed an influence coefficient value of 0.341 (34.1%), a calculated t-value of 2.400 (critical t> 1.96), a p-value of 0.000 (> alpha 0.05). This means that SCP has a positive and significant effect on KM, with a "low" influence power. The results of this study can be interpreted that an increase of 1 SCP unit increases the decision to vote by 34.1%. This means that the personal aspect and character of the candidate are still influential, but not dominant.

The results of this research show the results of the review through in-depth interviews with two resource persons involved in the 2024 Presidential Election campaign and survey. The two speakers are: (i) Much Adam Kamil (45 years), as Director Research on Indonesian Political Indicators. Previously (2005-02013) as Statistician at the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI). The two national-level survey institutions both play a role in conducting surveys related to the 2024 Presidential Election, among others. (ii) Mustofa Faruq (27 years old). Head of the Millennial Communication Bureau at DPP-PKS. In addition, he is also the General Chairman of the Garuda Keadilan Party Wing Organization. In addition, he was entrusted as one of the spokespersons in the Amin Team (Anies Muhaimin) and more specifically as one of the founders of or initiator of the "Change Together Movement".

The following are the results of the analysis of the results of this study involving the two sources.

The influence of the bandwagon effect on the decision to choose

The AMIN Paslon utilizes the strategy packaged through Desak Anies' activities as well as mass campaign actions such as Serang Anies. This activity is intended to show the amount of public enthusiasm, especially young groups and the urban middle class, towards the figure of Anies Baswedan. According to Moch Adam Kamil, Anies' visit agenda always managed to attract a massive crowd, so that it gave the impression as if the public support was very broad. Mustofa Faruq added that Desak Anies is designed as an interactive dialogue forum that is organic, involving people with critical interests, including artists, musicians, and the youth community. However, limited funds and resources make AMIN's bandwagon effect rely more on social media and limited face-to-face activities in big cities. This limitation creates a gap with the voter base in remote areas, which is relatively less affordable. In terms of effectiveness, the two speakers assessed that the AMIN bandwagon effect was not optimal, which can be seen from the failure of this candidate to win the contest.

The PRAGIB candidate, on the other hand, is considered the most dominant in utilizing the bandwagon effect. Moch Adam Kamil emphasized that the large mobilization of the masses, the intensive use of social media, and the Gemoy campaign strategy that highlights the carefree and relaxed image, are the main instruments in building the perception of massive public support. Faruq added that the strong funding factor, Prabowo's long experience in political contestation since 2009, and extensive political infrastructure support, strengthened PRAGIB's position as a candidate who is able to control almost all political communication channels. PRAGIR's success in showing massive support through open campaigns and digital media shows the effectiveness of the bandwagon effect they are running, which has proven to contribute significantly to victory in the 2024 Presidential Election.

Meanwhile, GAMA candidates are relatively less prominent in utilizing the bandwagon effect. Kamil stated that the GAMA campaign tends to be in an ambiguous position, with a narrative that is not as clear as AMIN (change) and PRAGIB (sustainability). The segment of GAMA voters, which generally come from the PDIP base, has also experienced erosion, because President Jokowi's political position is closer to PRAGIB. According to Faruq, this situation makes GAMA's campaign message less attractive and unable to mobilize the effect of large crowds. Even messages that tend to be cynical towards other candidates, especially PRAGIB, risk causing a backlash effect.

When compared as a whole, it can be seen that the bandwagon effect is most intensive and effectively utilized by PRAGIB, both through offline campaigns (mass mobilization and symbolic actions) and online (social media, buzzers, and artist/influencer involvement). AMIN seeks to exploit the bandwagon effect with a dialogical approach and organic social media, but is limited by resource limitations. Meanwhile, GAMA has relatively failed to utilize this strategy effectively, so its influence on electability is minimal.

How is the implementation of the bandwagon model by the three candidates and their effectiveness is compared through the following Table 1:

Candidate	Bandwagon Effect Campaign Form	Effectiveness
AMEN	- *Desak Anies* Activities (interactive forum, dialogue with the public) - *Anies Attack Action* (large masses, image of broad support) - Organic mobilization of young people and the urban middle class via social media - Symbolization of unique coalition (PKS-PKB)	*Low-medium*: able to build an intellectual image and attract urban/middle-class sympathy, but constrained by funds, limited reach (only large cities), and not penetrating the remote voter base. The end result is not electorally significant
PRAGIB	- Massive mass mobilization in open campaigns - *Gemoy campaign* (relaxed, carefree image, close to young people) - Social media optimization (TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook) with buzzer & influencer support - Support of political infrastructure and strong funds	*High:* very effective, as massive support is visible across multiple channels (offline and online). Wide reach, a positive image is formed, and contributes significantly to the victory of the 2024 Presidential Election
GAMA	Conventional campaigns with a PDIP base - Ambiguous message between sustainability and change - Limited mass mobilization, not prominent on social media - Narrative tends to be cynical towards PRAGIB	*Low:* ineffective, as voter segmentation is blurred, public support is eroded to PRAGIB, and negative messages risk backfire. Stagnant electability in the range of the PDIP base

The influence of expected utility on the decision to choose

In the framework of the model expected utility, interviews with Much Adam Kamil and Mustofa Faruq show that the use of this approach in the 2024 presidential election campaign is relatively uniform among the three candidate pairs (paslon), although their effectiveness varies.

Much Adam Kamil assessed that basically all candidates use campaign promises that are normative and noble, so that there is not much differentiation that can be captured from the perspective of expected utility. He even doubted the claim that the free nutritious lunch program (MGB) was the main electoral factor in the victory of the Prabowo-Gibran candidate. From his observations, the slogan of the AMIN candidate is actually more popular, but it is not directly proportional to the level of electability. This

shows that the expected utility model is not strong in explaining the distribution of voter support in Indonesia.

On the other hand, Mustofa Faruq emphasized the importance of simplicity of the program in influencing people's choices. According to him, simple programs such as MGB are easy to understand and relevant to daily needs, so that they are able to create strong electoral resonance. He gave an example of how this issue is constantly repeated in debates and consistently conveyed by the PRAGIB candidate, making it a symbol that is easy to capture by the general public. In his view, the majority of Indonesians (around 80%) do not seriously read the passport's vision-mission document because it is considered too abstract and complex. Thus, programs that are simple, concrete, and directly touch the basic needs of voters are more effective in the context of expected utility.

Both views show the tension between the abstraction of the vision-mission and the concretization of the program. The AMIN candidate is considered to have substantive and aspirational visions and missions, such as the issue of education and the elimination of age discrimination, but these ideas are difficult to convey simply to the wider community whose level of political literacy is relatively low. As a result, the effectiveness of AMIN's expected utility strategy is limited, as most voters respond more to programs that are practical and direct.

Instead, PRAGIB has succeeded in capitalizing on the expected utility model through simple populist programs, such as MGB, while continuing existing social assistance policies. This is in line with the expectations of the majority of voters, especially the lower middle group, who tend to judge concrete benefits rather than policy abstractions. PRAGIR's success in winning the election can be seen as an indication that their expected utility strategy is more effective than the other two candidates, although this factor is not the only determinant of the distribution of support.

Meanwhile, the GAMA candidate faces great difficulties in formulating expected utility-based differentiation. Their support base is actually considered to be built more on expressions of disappointment with the incumbent, rather than concrete program promises. This makes their appeal limited, even in traditional bases such as Central Java, so the effectiveness of expected utility in GAMA's strategy is considered very weak.

Overall, the findings of the two speakers show that the application of the expected utility model in the 2024 Presidential Election campaign in Indonesia is more effective when it is realized in the form of a program that is simple, direct, and easy for the public to understand. However, this model still has limitations in explaining voter behavior as a whole, considering other factors such as political identity, popular figures, and socio-economic dynamics that also affect the distribution of electoral support.

How to compare the implementation of the expected utility model by the three candidates and their effectiveness, is recapitulated through the following Table 2:\

Table 2 Comparison of Expected Utility Utilization in the 2024 Presidential Election

Candidate	Expected Utility Campaign Form	Effectiveness
AMEN	- Carrying the **theme of change** as a differentiation from the incumbent candidate.- Offering big ideas (vision-mission of education, human rights, corruption, welfare).- However, the programs are often **abstract and general**, difficult to translate into simple messages.- Anies' campaign with its style **of argument and public debate** emphasizes rationality and aspiration.	- **Limited effectiveness**, because the majority of voters are not familiar with the argumentation model.- Abstract programs are difficult to accept by the educated/low-literacy community.- Stronger in the middle-upper segment of voters who are able to understand complex visions and missions
PRAGIB	- Offer **simple, populist and easy-to-understand** programs (e.g., **Free Nutritious Meals / MBG**).- Consistently repeated in debates and campaigns, so that they are embedded in the public memory.- Continue social **assistance programs** that are immediately felt by the community.- Tailor promises to the daily needs of voters	- **Most effective**, proven to win elections.- Simplicity of message → more easily accepted by segments of society.- Programs are considered relevant by the majority (especially the lower-middle class & mothers).
GAMA	- Carrying a **Jokowi-style sustainability narrative** but with a position of "heartache" because it is abandoned.- Visions and missions exist, but it is difficult to reduce them to simple concrete programs.- Lack of differentiation, difficult to penetrate the established mass base	- **Ineffective**, even in the traditional base (Central Java) it is difficult to match PRAGIB.- Programs and campaigns do not sufficiently touch the expectations of daily voters.- Perceived as a candidate who has lost the direction of strategy.

Source: Interview results recapitulation (2025)

The Influence of Simple Candidate Preferences on Voting Decisions

Based on the results of the interviews, it can be concluded that all candidate pairs (AMIN, PRAGIB, and GAMA) use the model simple candidate preference in their campaign strategy. Much Adam Kamil emphasized that the three presidential candidates have integrity and capabilities that are positively assessed by the majority of voters, so theoretically they have high acceptability potential. However, personal image alone is not enough. The process of internalizing the candidate's image still requires intermediaries in the form of social nodes, especially political party networks, which play a role in expanding the candidate's reach to the grassroots.

At this point, Mustofa Faruq underlined that the brand recognition factor is also crucial. According to him, Prabowo has a significant advantage because he has advanced four times in the presidential election, so that the public already has established knowledge about him (product knowledge). This distinguishes his position from Anies and Ganjar who still relatively need wider recognition, especially outside the urban base. Thus, the effectiveness of simple candidate preference for each candidate is not only determined by personal image, but also by electoral capital that has accumulated from previous political experience.

In relation to the influence on the younger generation, Much Adam Kamil assessed that the simple candidate preference model does have an effect on the younger generation, but it is not entirely decisive. The image of being smart or competent is considered insufficient to distinguish candidates because all presidential candidates basically have capabilities. What is more prominent is the image of "concern for the people". Mustofa Faruq added that for the younger generation, especially students and the educated middle class, Anies has an attraction because of his articulation skills which are similar to SBY's communicative style. However, overly complex narratives are also a weakness because not all young people have the same political literacy, making it difficult for campaign messages to be conveyed evenly.

Adam Kamil emphasized that there are differences in preferences between generations. The millennial generation tends to appreciate free, creative, and informal communication styles. In contrast, older age groups are more comfortable with normative and formal approaches. This shows that simple candidate preference-based campaign strategies need to be adapted according to generational segmentation.

Regarding the use of simple candidate preference by each candidate and its dominance, all three candidates use this approach, albeit with different levels of differentiation. According to Adam Kamil, the AMIN candidate displayed the most prominent differentiation, especially through the figure of Anies who is known to be articulate and critical. The GAMA candidate does not show any new characteristics, while PRAGIB actually pressures Prabowo's personal character to be softer, by giving Gibran room to appear confident. However, the effectiveness is greater in PRAGIB, which shows that the simple candidate preference strategy does not always depend on differentiation, but on conformity with voter preferences and party mobilization strength.

The extent of the effectiveness of the implementation of the simple candidate preference campaign Adam Kamil assessed that the implementation of this model cannot be separated from the expected utility framework, because candidate preferences are a function of voters' expectations of the benefits to be obtained. Meanwhile, Faruq revealed a specific challenge for AMIN, namely the gap between a

complex narrative and the need to simplify the message for grassroots voters. On the other hand, PRAGIB is more effective because it is supported by an established electoral base and strong party consolidation. GAMA, despite having the support of PDIP, actually lost most of its base to PRAGIB, mainly because of voters' emotional attachment to Jokowi's figure.

Overall, the findings of the two speakers show that: (i) The simple candidate preference model is indeed the initial foundation of the campaign strategy of the three candidates. However, its effectiveness is greatly influenced by the candidate's brand recognition (long-term political capital, such as Prabowo's). (ii) Support and consolidation of political parties as social nodes that expand the reach of candidates. (iii) Narrative suitability with a segment of the electorate (complex for the middle-class-educated, simple and popular for grassroots voters). In the context of the 2024 Presidential Election, PRAGIB is superior in combining these three factors, so that it succeeds in optimizing the simple candidate preference model more effectively than AMIN and GAMA.

How is the implementation of the simple candidate preference model by the three candidates and their effectiveness is compared through the following Table 3:

Table 3. Comparison of the Utilization of Simple Candidate Preference in the 2024 Presidential Election

Candidate	Simple Candidate Preference Campaign Form	Effectiveness	Information
AMEN	Relying on Anies' image as an intellectual, religious, and critical figure of the status quo; supported by a personal narrative that contrasts with the old elite	**Moderate** → Effective in critical, religious, and urban segments of voters, but less popular among grassroots voters.	Candidate preferences are stronger among educated voters, less contagious to a broad mass base.
PRAGIB	Relying on Prabowo's image as a firm, populist figure, as well as a "father of the nation"; strengthened by Gibran's popularity which is associated with Jokowi.	**High** → Effective nationally, taking advantage of the public's simple liking (like/dislike) for Prabowo's figure and emotional connection with Jokowi.	Most successful in building *simple preferences* based on emotional closeness

Candidate	Simple Candidate Preference Campaign Form	Effectiveness	Information
GAMA	Relying on Ganjar's image as a simple and popular figure; Mahfud as a clean and intellectual figure	**Low–Medium →** Potential but poorly communicated; unable to rival PRAGIB's emotional appeal.	The candidate's image is positive, but the narrative is not massive enough to bind voters emotionally

The results of the study indicate that the three models of political communication messages Bandwagon Effect, Expected Utility, and Simple Candidate Preference have a significant but varying degree of influence in influencing voters' voting decisions in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election. Field findings obtained through questionnaire distribution, interviews, and media analysis show that each model works in a different psychological pathway, thus providing a non-uniform impact on voter behavior.

The bandwagon effect has a strong influence on most respondents, especially voters who are intensively exposed to information regarding the high electability and popularity of certain candidates. Many voters admitted that the trend of public support, the widespread publication of surveys, and the virality of support on social media made them feel more confident in choosing the candidate they considered "most likely to win." The bandwagon effect has been proven to be a psychological force that indirectly provides social legitimacy to popular candidates, thus influencing undecided or non-ideological voters to follow the direction of majority support.

The influence of expected utility appears significant, especially among rational voter groups, such as highly educated voters, urban voters, and those actively following policy debates. Findings indicate that voters who consider the work programs, track records, and potential economic and social benefits of a particular candidate tend to be influenced by this model. Factors such as development vision, welfare policies, economic stability, and leadership experience are the main reasons for their choice. The Expected Utility model works through logical considerations, thus providing a stable but less strong influence than the Bandwagon Effect on a broad voter group.

Simple candidate preference has a significant influence, especially among voters whose political decisions are shaped by emotional impressions and the candidate's image. Factors such as friendliness, communication style, appearance, how the candidate interacts with the public, and the psychological closeness formed through social media are dominant factors. Findings suggest that young voters tend to be more influenced by this model, as they perceive candidates more through digital media and simple visual content.

When the three models were compared, the study found that the Bandwagon Effect had the strongest influence in the context of the 2024 Presidential Election, primarily due to the widespread use of electability surveys and the virality of support across various media platforms. Simple Candidate Preference came in second, driven by

a campaign style that heavily utilized social media and the candidate's personal branding. Meanwhile, Expected Utility, while still influential, showed the lowest influence compared to the other two models, as not all voters make rational calculations before making political choices.

Research results show that voting decisions in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election are more influenced by psychological and perceptual aspects than purely rational considerations. This indicates that political communication in the digital era shapes voter behavior patterns that are highly responsive to the dynamics of public opinion and the representation of candidate images. These findings provide important insights that political communication strategies focused on creating perceptions of public dominance and strengthening image can be more effective in influencing electoral behavior than campaigns that rely solely on policy arguments.

Discussion

Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis testing used t-tests and p-tests. The results of the t-test are as follows:

Ho: t-test < 1.96, meaning there is no significant relationship between the independent construct and the dependent construct.

Ho: t-test > 1.96, meaning there is a significant relationship between the independent construct and the dependent construct.

Regarding hypothesis testing, the probability value (p-value) must be lower than 5% or 0.05, with the following conditions:

Ho: Accepted if the significance value (p-value) > 0.05 (5%)

Ha: Rejected if the significance value (p-value) < 0.05 (5%)

Hypothesis testing was conducted on three hypotheses in this study, all of which are direct and partial effects. The results of the hypothesis testing using significance are supplemented with p-values, as presented in Table 4

Table 4 Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis Model	Path Coefficient Value	Significance		Conclusion
		T Statistics	P Values	
H-1: *Banwagon Effect* → Decision to Choose	0,561	T count/t statistic (4.870) > t critical/t table (1.96)	p-value (0.005) < alpha value (0.05)	Positive and significant impact H-1 Proven
H-2: *Simple Candidate Preference*→ Decision to Choose	0,341	T count/t statistic (2.400) > t critical/t table (1.96)	P-value (0.000) < alpha value	Positive and significant impact H-2 Proven
H-3: *Expected Utility* → Decision to Choose	0,453	T count/t statistic (2.530) > t critical/t table (1.96)	P-value (0.007) > alpha value (0.05)	Positive and significant impact D-3 Proven

The research results prove that the bandwagon effect model of political communication strategy has a positive and significant influence on the voting decision of the millennial generation in DKI Jakarta Province in the 2024 presidential election. The magnitude of the influence of the bandwagon effect on the voting decision is 0.561 or 56.1 percent. This indicates that there is a similar tendency between the bandwagon effect trend and the voting decision. If the bandwagon effect increases by one unit, the voting decision also increases, namely 0.561 or 56.1 percent. The 56.1 percent increase, based on the coefficient interval according to Sugiyono, is included in the influence of "moderate" strength.

The significance test of the influence of the bandwagon effect on voting decisions is with a t-value of 4.870 (> 1.96) and a p-value of 0.005 (< alpha 0.05), which means the bandwagon effect has a positive and significant effect on the decision to vote for the millennial generation in DKI Jakarta Province in the 2024 presidential election. This means that the first hypothesis is proven. The discussion of the results of this study can be reviewed from statistical aspects, theoretical aspects, previous research aspects, and factual aspects.

The explanation of why the banwagon effect has a positive and significant influence on voting decisions can be seen from the banwagon effect indicator which has the highest cross-loading value on voting decisions. As presented in Table 4 regarding the results of the discriminant validity test with cross-loading, namely the BE9 indicator (cross-loading value of 0.550) and the BE3 indicator (cross-loading value of 0.489). The BE9 indicator reads "My support for a particular presidential/vice presidential candidate pair is in accordance with the direction of political figures (such as the General Chairperson of a political party) or political experts." The BE3 indicator reads "I adjust my attitude regarding the presidential/vice presidential candidate pair to the attitudes of most people."

The results of the study prove that the expected utility model of political communication strategy has a positive and significant effect on the voting decisions of the millennial generation in DKI Jakarta Province in the 2024 presidential election. The magnitude of the influence of expected utility on voting decisions is 0.453 or 45.3 percent. This indicates that there is a similar trend between the expected utility trend and the voting decision. If the expected utility increases by one unit, the voting decision also increases, namely 0.453 or 45.3 percent. The 45.3 percent increase, based on the coefficient interval according to Sugiyono (2013), is included in the influence of "moderate" strength.

The significance test of the influence of expected utility on voting decisions is with a t-value of 2.530 (> 1.96) and a p-value of 0.007 (< alpha 0.05), which means that expected utility has a positive and significant effect on the decision to vote for the millennial generation in DKI Jakarta Province in the 2024 presidential election. This means that the second hypothesis is proven. The discussion of the results of this study can be reviewed from statistical aspects, theoretical aspects, previous research aspects, and factual aspects.

The explanation of why expected utility has a positive and significant influence on voting decisions can be seen from the expected utility indicator which has the highest cross-loading value on voting decisions. As presented in Table 4 regarding the results of the discriminant validity test with cross-loading, namely the EUM6 indicator (cross-loading value of 0.277) and the EUM2 indicator (cross-loading value of 0.253).

The EUM6 indicator reads "I prefer a presidential/vice-presidential candidate who I believe will be able to provide adequate employment (if they lead)." The EUM2 indicator reads "I will choose a presidential/vice-presidential candidate pair who I believe will increase the spending budget if elected."

The research results prove that the simple candidate preference model of political communication strategy has a positive and significant influence on the voting decisions of the millennial generation in DKI Jakarta Province in the 2024 presidential election. The magnitude of the influence of simple candidate preference on voting decisions is 0.341 or 34.1 percent. This indicates that there is a similar trend between the simple candidate preference trend and voting decisions. If simple candidate preference increases by one unit, then the voting decision also increases, namely 0.341 or 34.1 percent. The 34.1 percent increase, based on the coefficient interval according to Sugiyono is included in the influence of "low" strength.

The significance test for the influence of simple candidate preference on voting decisions was t-value = 2.400 (> 1.96) and p-value 0.000 (< alpha 0.05), indicating that simple candidate preference has a positive and significant effect on the voting decisions of millennials in DKI Jakarta Province in the 2024 presidential election. This confirms the second hypothesis. The discussion of the results of this study can be viewed from statistical, theoretical, previous research, and factual perspectives.

The explanation for the positive and significant influence of simple candidate preference on voting decisions can be seen from the simple candidate preference indicators with the highest cross-loading values. As presented in Table 4.7, the results of the discriminant validity test with cross-loadings are indicator SCP4 (cross-loading value 0.589) and indicator SCP13 (cross-loading value 0.578). The SCP4 indicator states, "I prefer presidential/vice presidential candidates who are skilled at persuading or influencing constituents or other parties." The SCP13 indicator reads "I am only interested in presidential/vice presidential candidates whose track record has proven them capable of fulfilling their campaign promises."

CONCLUSION

As a model for political education communication, simple candidate preference has two intertwined sides. On the one hand, this model is effective in increasing the accessibility of political information and encouraging public political participation, especially for first-time voters and groups with limited political literacy. However, on the other hand, the dominance of the bandwagon effect and its orientation toward short-term utility have the potential to weaken the quality of political education if not accompanied by strengthening critical awareness. Therefore, this model should be positioned as an initial, introductory means of political education, rather than as the ultimate goal in shaping citizens' political awareness. Therefore, this study suggests that the simple candidate preference model be positioned as the initial stage in inclusive political education communication, rather than as the sole approach. Political education needs to be developed sustainably, emphasizing an understanding of policy substance, candidate track records, democratic values, and political ethics. Political actors and political communication practitioners are expected to prioritize communication strategies that are educational and imbued with integrity, so that the

bandwagon effect is not solely exploited for short-term electoral interests, but is directed toward strengthening the quality of public political participation. This research also opens up opportunities for more in-depth and diverse follow-up studies. Future research could empirically examine the influence of the bandwagon effect and expected utility through quantitative approaches or experimental methods, thus obtaining a more measurable picture of voter behavior. Furthermore, comparative studies across regions, generations, or media platforms could be conducted to understand the variation in the impact of simple candidate preference models in different socio-political and cultural contexts.

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