



POLITICAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF MEDAN CITY DPRD MEMBERS DURING RECESS IN THEIR ELECTORAL DISTRICT IN LABUHAN, MEDAN

Anugerah Zebua¹, Salman Hasibuan², Evi Enitari Napitupulu³, Lola Gebri Andayati Br Sembiring⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Universitas Sari Mutiara Indonesia, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: anugerahzebua12@gmail.com

Article Info

Article history:

Received :

Revised :

Accepted :

Available online

<http://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/analytica>

E-ISSN: 2541-5263

P-ISSN: 1411-4380



This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the political communication strategy of members of the Medan City Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) in conducting recess activities in the Constituency of Two Medan Labuhan Districts. Recess is an important constitutional mechanism for legislators to collect constituent aspirations and strengthen the relationship between the legislature and the community. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. Informants comprised one DPRD member as the key informant and five constituent community members as supporting informants. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model. The findings reveal that the communication strategies employed include: (1) direct communication through face-to-face forums and constituent dialogue; (2) utilization of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and official websites for disseminating information and documenting recess activities; and (3) synergy with the Musrenbang mechanism to follow up on public aspirations. Despite challenges such as the diversity of constituent characteristics and aspirations not yet fully realized, council members have developed their own approaches to maximize the effectiveness of recess activities. This study concludes that an integrative communication strategy combining direct and digital approaches is crucial to the successful absorption of aspirations during recess.

Keywords: Political Communication Strategy; DPRD Recess; Constituent Aspirations; Social Media; Legislative Communication; Constituency

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a crucial part of human life, including in the context of national and political life. Effective communication is communication in which the message conveyed by the communicator is well understood by the recipient and produces an impact, whether

in the form of changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behavior (Mulyana, 2023). In the political sphere, communication plays a central role as a bridge between the government and the people, between policymakers and constituents affected by those policies.

As part of Indonesia's representative democratic system, the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) carries out legislative, budgeting, and oversight functions. Beyond this, the DPRD also serves as a channel for public aspirations. One formal mechanism for carrying out this aspiration-absorbing function is recess. Recess is a session period during which council members leave the parliamentary building and directly visit their constituencies to listen to and record community needs and complaints (Hidayatullah & Pribadi, 2019).

Based on applicable regulations, every DPRD member is required to undertake regular working visits to their electoral district (Dapil). This obligation is not merely an administrative procedure, but rather a democratic instrument that allows the people to convey their interests directly to their elected representatives. The aspirations gathered during the recess are then formulated into the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) Main Thoughts (Pokir) and integrated into the regional development planning process through the Development Planning Deliberation (Musrenbang) (Kurniasih & Rusfiana, 2021).

In Medan City, particularly in Electoral District Two, which includes the districts of Medan Deli, Medan Belawan, Medan Marelan, and Medan Labuhan, recess activities are highly relevant given the many unfulfilled public aspirations, ranging from road infrastructure improvements, health services through the Social Security Agency (BPJS), social assistance, to environmental security issues. With a quota of 12 DPRD seats for Electoral District 2, effective communication between council members and constituents is key to the success of the representation function.

However, the success of the recess is not solely determined by the physical presence of council members in the field, but also depends heavily on the communication strategies employed. Without the right strategy, recess activities risk becoming mere formalities with no real impact on the community. Previous research has shown variations in communication strategies used by DPRD members in various regions, including the increasingly dominant use of social media as a modern communication channel (Firmansyah, 2022; Holilah et al., 2023). However, no specific study has been conducted on the political communication strategies of Medan City DPRD members during recess in Medan Labuhan District. Based on this, this study aims to analyze in-depth the political communication strategies employed by Medan City DPRD members during recess in Electoral District Two, Medan Labuhan District, from the planning stage through implementation, to evaluation and follow-up on public aspirations.

This study aims to analyze and describe the political communication strategies used by members of the Medan City DPRD in carrying out recess activities in Electoral District Two, Medan Labuhan District. This objective is explained through the following research questions: What communication strategies are implemented by members of the Medan City DPRD in planning and implementing recess activities in Electoral District 2, Medan Labuhan District? What communication channels are most effectively used in the process of absorbing constituent aspirations during recess activities? What is the mechanism for evaluating and following up on community aspirations after the recess activities are carried out?

Based on a review of previous research, it can be identified that previous studies tend to focus on aspects of public participation, communication models based on the educational background of council members, or election winning strategies. This study fills this gap by focusing on the overall political communication strategy (planning, implementation, evaluation) in the context of recess in the urban area of Medan City, with particular attention to the role of social media as a contemporary communication channel.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive studies. Qualitative methods were chosen because this research aims to deeply understand a complex social phenomenon, namely political communication strategies in the context of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) recess. Sugiyono (2020) states that qualitative research methods are based on post-positivism philosophy, are used to examine natural conditions of objects, and produce descriptive-interpretive data.

The research was conducted at the Medan City DPRD Office, Jalan Kapten Maulana Lubis No. 1 Medan, and in the field in Medan Labuhan District, Medan City. The research lasted from January to June 2025. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: (1) having direct knowledge of recess activities in Electoral District 2, and (2) being willing to provide information openly. Informants consisted of one member of the Medan City DPRD from Electoral District 2 as the key informant and five constituents in Medan Labuhan District as supporting informants. The informant profiles are presented in Table 2.

Data were collected through three complementary techniques. First, in-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide to explore the perceptions, experiences, and strategies used by informants during recess activities. Second, non-participant observation was conducted to observe the communication process taking place during recess activities without directly participating in the activity. Third, a documentation study was conducted by analyzing official DPRD documents, recess reports, council members' social media content, and other relevant materials. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman interactive model (in Sugiyono, 2019), which consists of four stages: (1) comprehensive data collection from various sources; (2) data reduction by sorting and focusing on relevant information; (3) data presentation in the form of a systematic descriptive narrative; and (4) drawing conclusions and verifying them based on valid and consistent evidence.

Data validity was ensured through triangulation, which included: (1) data triangulation by comparing interview results from various informants; (2) theory triangulation by testing findings using various theoretical perspectives; and (3) triangulation of methods by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, member checking was carried out to ensure the accuracy of data interpretation.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Communication Strategy in Recess Activities

In-depth interviews with key informant H.T. BahrumSyah, S.H., M.H., revealed that the communication strategy during recess activities was built on two main, complementary approaches. The first approach is direct communication through face-to-face meetings with constituents, where council members actively convey information regarding programs and policies currently being or will be implemented. The second approach is the use of digital communication media. As he explained:

"To absorb aspirations, communication is not only carried out during recess activities, there are two methods used: first, we gather our constituents to provide some information related to the recess activity programs carried out by the Medan City DPRD, the second method we use communication media in the form of social media through Instagram, the web, and others."

In practice, face-to-face forums serve not only as a platform for council members to convey information but also as an arena for two-way dialogue, providing the public with ample space to voice their aspirations and complaints. Meanwhile, social media is used to document and expand the reach of information on recess activities to constituents unable to attend in person.

Public assessments of the quality of communication during recess are generally positive. Informant I4 stated that communication by DPRD members was excellent and easy to understand. A similar assessment was shared by Informant I5, who described the communication by council members as good. Informant I6 added that communication during recess was quite good, as it was easy to understand and not too rigid.

Political Communication in Recess

Recess activities in Electoral District 2, Medan Labuhan District, covered six sub-districts: Sei Mati, Pekan Labuhan, Nelayan Indah, Tangkahan, Martubung, and Besar. Council members served as both political communicators and recipients of messages from constituents. One key aspect of the political communication implemented was the ability to adapt to the diverse characteristics of constituents. A key informant emphasized:

"First, we know that our communities have different resources. Of course, their communication styles also vary. So, we must first understand their character and be able to connect with our constituents. Once the community is close to us, all the obstacles in communicating become less difficult."

During recess, council members also conduct working visits to various sub-districts within their electoral districts to understand the current conditions of the community. This approach reflects the principle of two-way political communication as proposed by Gruning (2019), where communication is not a one-way process from the government to the people, but rather a process involving the reciprocal exchange of information and influence.

Communication strategy is a combination of communication planning and management to achieve specific goals (Effendy, 2020). Middleton explains that communication strategy is the optimal combination of all communication elements, including communicators, messages, channels, and recipients, designed to produce optimal effects or influence. Meanwhile, Arifin (in Mayang, 2020) defines it as the

calculation of communication planning and management to achieve predetermined communication objectives.

According to Priantoro (2019), communication strategy has two main components: first, the structured dissemination of informative, persuasive, and instructive messages; second, the ability to bridge differences in audience backgrounds so that the message is received effectively. In practice, the operational steps of an effective communication strategy include: (1) knowing the target audience, (2) determining communication objectives, (3) composing messages that are on target, and (4) determining methods and selecting appropriate media (Arifin in Hidayat, 2020).

Implementation and Mechanism of Recess

The recess implementation process in Electoral District 2, Medan Labuhan District, followed a structured process. The first stage was publicizing the recess activities to constituents, conducted through direct invitations and social media. The second stage was a recess forum, where the public expressed their aspirations and complaints directly. All submitted aspirations were recorded and documented as the council members' Main Thoughts (Pokir). A key informant explained:

"We will listen to the complaints of the people involved in each region and record all the aspirations they convey. Of course, we will document all the aspirations we collect, including our main ideas. We will then hold meetings with the commission and convey their aspirations to the relevant agencies."

The aspirations gathered from the community varied, reflecting the various problems faced by residents of Medan Labuhan District. Informant I2 highlighted the issue of drug trafficking as a major concern for residents. Informant I4 raised the issue of BPJS Kesehatan services, which hinders residents' access to healthcare facilities. Furthermore, complaints about flooding, road repairs, and drainage construction were also repeatedly voiced. Follow-up mechanisms were implemented through synergy with the Musrenbang process. Key informants outlined this pattern:

"There's a recess plan, and this recess plan is also discussed in the Musrenbang (Development Meeting) with the sub-district head. In the Musrenbang, we also play a role in upholding the aspirations of the people in our electoral district, ensuring their strength—we have data, and the sub-district head also has data, so we can work together to make it a shared aspiration between the legislative and executive branches."

Recess is a formal mechanism in Indonesia's representative system that requires council members to periodically visit their constituencies outside of session periods. Hidayatullah and Pribadi (2019) define recess as a period during which the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) conducts activities outside the building to visit their constituencies to gather public input. Kurniasih and Rusfiana (2021) add that recess is a means of political communication between council members and their constituents, involving gathering input and receiving complaints.

From a strategic management perspective, recess evaluation must be conducted continuously. David and David (2019) emphasize that strategic evaluation activities must be ongoing, not limited to the end of a term or after a problem arises. This is relevant to

the function of recess, which should not stop at gathering input but rather continue with measurable and accountable follow-up.

Political communication is defined as the process of conveying messages, information, or ideas related to politics to the public, with the aim of influencing public attitudes, opinions, and political behavior. Gruning (2019) asserts that political communication is a two-way process involving interaction between the government and the public, where each party influences the other in determining public policy. Meanwhile, Rogers and Storey (2020) emphasize that political communication is the delivery of messages about political activities and policies through various communication channels to influence public views and behavior.

In the legislative context, political communication serves as a means for members of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) to convey the results of their work to constituents while also absorbing input and complaints from the grassroots. Anwar Arifin (2019) emphasizes the importance of maintaining the character and credibility of political communicators, as well as strengthening institutions as key requirements for effective political communication.

Strategy evaluation is conducted not only at the end of a term, but also on an ongoing basis. The evaluation mechanism includes monitoring the realization of aspirations incorporated into the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD). Council members use three main functions of the DPRD as oversight instruments: the legislative function (creating regional regulations), the budgeting function (through the Budget Agency), and the oversight function of the implementation of activities by relevant regional government agencies (OPD). A key informant explained:

"In this budgeting process, we will certainly try to communicate with the Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPDs)/Agencies (Dinas) to convince them that this is a priority and should be incorporated into the regional government's work plan. Therefore, we will include it in the RKPD documentation so that it becomes part of their OPD activities. That's where we oversee it, because our functions are threefold: creating regional regulations, budgeting, and oversight."

Discussion

Integration of Direct and Digital Approaches

The findings of this study indicate that the communication strategies used by Medan City DPRD members during recess in Medan Labuhan District are integrative, combining face-to-face communication with the use of digital media. This aligns with Middleton's (in Mayang, 2020) view, which emphasizes the importance of optimally combining all communication elements communicators, messages, channels, and recipients—to achieve effective communication. The use of social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter not only expands the reach of information but also demonstrates council members' public accountability to constituents who cannot attend in person. This finding aligns with the research of Firmansyah (2022) who found that DPRD members from Electoral District 3 of Lima Puluh Kota Regency also utilized social media as a means of sharing documentation of recess activities. However, this study provides a richer picture of how digital communication strategies are integrated into the entire recess cycle, from outreach to post-activity accountability.

Two-Way Communication as the Core of Recess

The two-way communication approach emphasized in this study emphasizes the role of recess as a true instrument of democracy. Council members not only convey information but also actively listen to and document constituents' needs. This reflects the two-way political communication model proposed by Gruning (2019), where effective communication between the government and the public requires openness from both parties. The emphasis on the importance of understanding the diverse characteristics of constituents also aligns with the principle of knowing the audience, which is the first step in a communication strategy according to Arifin (in Hidayat, 2020). Constituents in Medan Labuhan District have heterogeneous socio-economic backgrounds—from traders and neighborhood heads to entrepreneurs—so flexibility in communication style is a prerequisite for successfully absorbing aspirations.

Synergy between Recess and Musrenbang

The most prominent finding in this study is the synergy between the recess mechanism and the Musrenbang (Regional Development Planning Forum) as a strategy to ensure public aspirations are empowered in the regional planning process. This pattern was not explicitly found in the research by Holilah et al. (2023) or Thalib et al. (2023). By integrating the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) Pokir (Regional Development Planning) into the Regional Work Plan (RKPD) document, aspirations captured during recess have a greater chance of being realized as development programs, rather than simply being left unfollowed.

However, this study also identified a gap between expectations and reality. Some constituents still feel that recess is merely a formality because not all aspirations expressed are realized. This finding aligns with Thalib et al.'s (2023) observation that low public participation is partly due to weak post-recess follow-up. This suggests that a strong communication strategy during recess alone is insufficient without a consistent commitment to implementation.

This study has several limitations that require consideration. First, only one DPRD member served as a key informant, so the perspectives obtained do not represent the full range of communication strategies that might be employed by the 12 council members in Electoral District 2. Future research should expand the scope of informants to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Second, the limited observation period, which occurred during a single recess period, does not allow for an analysis of changes in communication strategies over time. Longitudinal research would provide a more in-depth understanding of the dynamics of these strategies. Third, this study did not quantitatively measure the effectiveness of each strategy, so a measurable comparison of the impact between face-to-face and social media approaches cannot be made.

4. CONCLUSION

This study successfully analyzed the political communication strategies of Medan City Council (DPRD) members during their recess in Electoral District Two, Medan Labuhan District. Based on the findings and discussion, three main conclusions can be drawn. First, the communication strategy implemented is integrative, combining direct face-to-face

communication with constituents and the use of social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and the official website) as two complementary pillars. The direct approach builds emotional closeness and trust, while digital media expands reach and increases transparency of recess activities. Second, political communication during recess is carried out in a two-way manner, with an emphasis on the council members' ability to understand and adapt to the diverse characteristics of their constituents. This ability is a key prerequisite for effectively absorbing aspirations that cover a variety of real citizen problems, ranging from BPJS health services and road infrastructure improvements to flood mitigation and drug issues. Third, the evaluation and follow-up mechanisms are carried out through synergy with the Musrenbang process and the integration of Pokir into the RKPD document, which is then overseen by the DPRD's three main functions: legislation, budgeting, and oversight. However, there is still public hope that the realization of aspirations can be carried out more consistently and transparently, given that some constituents still feel that recess tends to be a formality. Therefore, the effectiveness of recess depends not only on the quality of the communication strategy but also on a commitment to concrete and measurable follow-up

References

- Abijaya, S., Wildanu, E., & Jamaludin, A. (2021). Peranan kepemimpinan dalam organisasi. *Jurnal Soshum Insentif*, 4(1), 17–26.
- Arifin, A. (2019). *Komunikasi politik: Paradigma, teori, aplikasi, strategi dan komunikasi politik Indonesia*. Balai Pustaka.
- David, F. R., & David, F. R. (2019). *Strategic management: A competitive advantage approach, concepts and cases* (17th ed.). Pearson.
- Effendy, O. U. (2020). *Ilmu komunikasi: Teori dan praktek*. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Firmansyah, R. (2022). *Strategi komunikasi politik anggota DPRD dalam melakukan reses di daerah pemilihan 3 Kabupaten Lima Puluh Kota Provinsi Sumatera Barat [Disertasi Doktor]*. Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau.
- Gruning, J. E. (2019). *Excellence in public relations and communication management*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hidayatullah, & Pribadi, U. (2019). Efektivitas pelaksanaan reses anggota DPRD dalam menyerap aspirasi masyarakat. *Jurnal Pemerintahan dan Politik*, 4(2), 56–64.
- Holilah, H., & Ismail, M. (2023). Model komunikasi reses anggota DPRD dalam menyerap aspirasi masyarakat di Kabupaten Bangkalan: Studi berdasarkan latar belakang pendidikan anggota DPRD. *Indonesian Journal of Political Studies*, 3(2), 150–175.
- Kurniasih, D., & Rusfiana, Y. (2021). Fungsi reses anggota DPRD dalam mengartikulasikan aspirasi masyarakat Kabupaten Bandung. *Jurnal Academia Praja*, 4(2), 380–395.
- Mayang, C. (2020). Strategi komunikasi organisasi pemerintah daerah dalam mensosialisasikan program publik. *Jurnal Komunikasi Pembangunan*, 18(1), 45–58.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2019). *Analisis data kualitatif: Buku sumber tentang metode-metode baru* (T. R. Rohidi, Trans.). UI Press.
- Mulyana, D. (2023). *Ilmu komunikasi: Suatu pengantar* (Edisi ke-21). Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Priantoro, Y. (2019). Strategi komunikasi pemasaran politik calon legislatif dalam pemilihan umum. *Jurnal Komunikasi Politik*, 2(1), 12–25.

- Ramadhani, F., Gusman, E., & Farda, N. F. (2024). Efektivitas kegiatan reses anggota Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah Kabupaten Tanah Datar periode 2019–2024. *Otentik Law Journal*, 2(1), 16–27.
- Rogers, E. M., & Storey, J. D. (2020). Communication campaigns. In C. R. Berger & S. H. Chaffee (Eds.), *Handbook of communication science* (pp. 817–846). Sage.
- Sugiyono. (2020). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif dan R&D* (Edisi ke-2). Alfabeta.
- Thalib, H., Nusi, M., & Abd Razak, D. (2023). Partisipasi masyarakat pada pelaksanaan reses anggota DPRD Fraksi PAN Kota Gorontalo. *Jurnal Ilmu Politik dan Komunikasi*, 13(1), 88–101.
- Triwicaksono, Y. D. B., & Nugroho, A. (2021). Strategi komunikasi politik pemenangan kepala daerah. *Jurnal Lensa Mutiara Komunikasi*, 5(1), 133–145.
- Warsito Budi. (2019, September 25). 50 anggota DPRD Kota Medan 2019–2024 dilantik, terbanyak PDIP dan Gerindra. *Detik News*. <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4708122>