

## Chinese Ethnic Competition in North Sumatera Electoral District 1: Case Study on the Regional House of Representative of North Sumatera Province Member Election, Indonesia 2014

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**Abstract:** Indonesian Chinese people participation has only been formed since 1999 election. In the local context, political participation is gradually increasing including North Sumatera Province. Election with an open proportional system based on the largest number of votes provided a broad space for each individual including every ethnic group to participate in election. This research aims to explore why the Chinese ethnic candidate competition occurred in this era, how the competition form is and how is the electoral behavior form of Chinese ethnic candidates in the member election of North Sumatera Province House of Representative in 2014 with a case study of North Sumatera 1 Election Region. This research used descriptive qualitative method. The data was obtained through interview, literature studies and documentation. The results of the study show that there is a link between the election system and the struggle of Chinese candidates as well as the fight for votes by optimizing individual and organizational networks in social, political and economic fields in the Electoral District (*Daerah Pemilihan*).

**Keywords:** Competition, Chinese ethnic, Regional House of Representative, North Sumatera Province. Electoral District 1.

## INTRODUCTION

Ethnic minority involvement in the election has been explored through scientific studies such as ethnic minority representation in legislative institution [1, 2], legislative of minorities ethnic phenomena [3, 4], ethnic group vote mobilization in the electoral district [5], political preferences based on ethnic groups [6], political party campaign strategies in minority areas [7]. In Indonesian context, the research of minority ethnic involvement in Chinese ethnic participate in election has been studied by [8] that examined Chinese ethnic involvement in local political area in the reform era, while [9] studied the Chinese ethnic participation in election. In addition [10], focused on Chinese ethnic involvement as a support group in local election. The numerous studies explain that the awareness of Chinese ethnic politics in Indonesia gradually have formed active political participation in the electoral political area. The involvement of minorities is a must in democratic country that respects every citizen's rights and emphasizes the realization of any citizen participation political arena. This research aims to fill the previous research gap by exploring why minorities ethnic compete each other in one electoral district and

how they compete to win votes by taking a case study on Chinese candidates competition for North Sumatera Regional Representative Council (North Sumatera) in 2014 in North Sumatera 1 electoral district that covers 11 Sub-Districts in Medan City, namely: Amplas, Area, Belawan, Deli, Denai, Kota, Labuhan, Marelan, Perjuangan, Tembung, Timur.

This research background is Chinese candidate competition in North Sumatera Electoral Region 1 in 2014 House of Regional Representative member election. There are 5 Chinese candidates who competed in North Sumatera Election Region 1, the five candidates were Sanny Joan Salim, Haryanto, Brilliant Moktar, Ferdinan Godang and Sonny Firdaus. Based on 2010 population census data published by Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS RI) in 2011, Chinese ethnic population in North Sumatera Province was around 2.55% (340,320 people), Batak 43.4% (5,785,716 people), Javanese 32.4% (4,319,719 people), Malays 5.7% (771,668 people) and other ethnics [11]. With the small Chinese population, it is more likely to determine the action in political arena based on collective decision in ethnic groups. This argument is based on each ethnic

group with an identity as their emotional [12-14], and their inherent identity that has been formed long ago through an inherent social organization system [15]. Ethnic identity can be used as a resource allocated in the political field even though the phenomenon of minority ethnic competition in electoral arena appears to be strengthening in 2014 Regional House of Representative of North Sumatra member election. The competition among Chinese ethnic for voting occurred in North Sumatra electoral district (Dapil) 1.

In addition to explain why Chinese ethnic competition occurred, this study also provides an overview of the competition form and explains Chinese ethnic electoral behavior in North Sumatra Province. This study contributes to a new perspective of ethnic theory understanding in electoral politics (Election) with claims of ethnic theory explaining that ethnic groups have high social solidarity and social organization system. This research will elaborate whether the claim still can be applied or not in the electoral political arena. Research on this phenomenon is considered important since there are many effects arise from this competition namely formation of political factions among Chinese ethnic. This assumption is reinforced by the indication of community involvement to support the vote. To answer the research problem, ethnic electoral behavior theory stated by [16] was used to explain why the minority ethnic competition occurs in the electoral political arena. According to [16], ethnic group behavior is divided into two forms, namely: 1) cohesion and 2) flexible. Cohesion behavior occurs in short-term goal, while flexible behavior occurs when dealing with long-term goal for instance election. Election in democratic country [16], explains that ethnic electoral behavior is derived from *Ethnic Attractors* (ethnic actors who attract ethnicity), that effect form for instance is forming perceptions among ethnic voters on the image of a party.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research used qualitative research with a case study type. The case study was Electoral District 1 of North Sumatra 1 in 2014 Regional House of Representative of North Sumatra Province election. This study used descriptive method in analyzing data. The data was obtained through in-depth interview, literature and documentation study. This study had the limitation in obtaining the opportunity to conduct interviews with key informants due to the informants' busyness. The key informant who was successfully interviewed was Brilian Moktar from PDIP and Haryanto from PKPI. In addition, there was an assist from North Sumatra Province General Election Commission (KPU) to complete the data. Triangulation was used to validate the data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Ethnic Politics

Ethnicity is a group that has a unique identity article [17-22]. The identity is in the form of the same body characteristics [12], culture, ancestors, history, memories [13], has a shared belief in the similarities between them through habits, physical character or nostalgia during the migration and colonialization period [14]. In addition, there are other identities such as having social organization system and social network. These characteristics make ethnic groups have an appeal to be used as a "device" in empowering vote in election. Many studies consider that the ethnic group involvement have a strategic role to win vote in election [23-25]. One of the efforts to increase party's vote is to bring ethnic groups to win vote in the ethnic group's base [26]. Another way to mobilize vote from ethnic groups in the election is by raising the important issues in ethnic groups for instance ethnic marginalization in the political structures [27].

Indonesia adopts an open election system with direct election, multi-party system, women quota and elected legislative result based on the most votes. This fact indicates the election system in Indonesia as an open election system. In this system every citizen obtains the same rights by giving their political participation in the Election, including ethnic group involvement in the Election arena. In a closed election system, participation and representation are restricted only for certain individuals in ethnic groups who obtain an access on political power structure [28, 29].

The ethnic group involvement in election is a common thing, the most interesting is why the political competition among same ethnic groups to take over the legislative position occurred. This condition becomes more important in academic studies if the ethnic group is considered having "problems" in social interaction where most of them become inclusive (closed and avoid social integration). This state would make ethnic groups face difficult to obtain vote from other ethnic segments. Expecting to obtain vote from their own ethnic group with a small ethnic population and a large number of ethnic groups causes a fierce political competition. Moreover, the internal and external voice segmentation of ethnic groups remains as the main goal, so that in this state the ethnic electoral behavior will be formed. [16] explained that ethnic electoral behavior depends on the effect given by *Ethnic Attractors* (Actors who attract ethnicity), but in general ethnic electoral behavior according to Birnir is divided into two forms, namely: 1) cohesion and 2) flexible [16].

### The competition of Chinese Ethnic Candidate in North Sumatera Electoral District 1

Chinese Ethnic in North Sumatra Province is an ethnic minority in terms of population. According to Indonesian population census data in 2010, the number of Chinese ethnic was 2,832,510 people (1.20%), in North Sumatra Province was 340,320 people (2.55%) [11] and in Medan there was 201,519 people [30]. If

this amount was divided by Medan population in 2013 by 2,135,516 people, so the Chinese ethnic population in Medan was around 9.43% [31, 30] record Medan as one of the largest Chinese ethnic location in Indonesia after Jakarta.

The socio-political background of Chinese candidates in this competition is quite strong and broad. Haryanto was born, grew up and lived in Medan. Haryanto underwent formal education from elementary school (SD) till he reached the college level in Medan. This state explains Haryanto's total social activity in Medan. Haryanto's political knowledge was formed in 1994 since taking a law degree at Dharmawangsa University in Medan and active in Student Senate organization. A number of organizations such as Indonesian Buddha Young Generation (Gema Budhi) at Medan City level, North Sumatra Province level and continued in 2003 at the central level. In 1995 Haryanto joined in a prestigious youth organization in Indonesia, Indonesian Youth National Committee (KNPI), in Medan. Haryanto began to be involved in politics in 1999 by joining PKPI until 2014 national election. Haryanto's socio-economic background is classified as an established economy class. Haryanto worked in the private sector as the president director of Plastic manufacturing in Medan City and he had been a member of 2004 Regional House of Representative of North Sumatra Province through Inter-Time Substitution (PAW) mechanism. The experience of being a member of Regional House of Representative of North Sumatra Province helped to strengthen Haryanto's political knowledge while at the same time strengthening his political communication to the people in the electoral district (Haryanto, Interview, May 25, 2018).

Brilliant Moktar (Moktar) was born in Jambi Province. Moktar took formal education from elementary to high school in Jambi so that Moktar's social life was formed in Jambi. Moktar continued his education at HKBP Nomensen University in Medan and continued his Master degree at North Sumatra University in economics. Moktar is listed as a member of Indonesian Chinese Social Clan Association (PSMTI). Moktar has a socio-economic background as an entrepreneur. Moktar had worked for a number of companies and served as president in PT. Roda-Roda Gloal Motolindo. Moktar has a political background as a PDIP cadre and has never moved to another party. In 2009 Election, Moktar was elected as a member of North Sumatra Electoral District 1, so that in 2014 election he had political capital as a member of Regional House of Representative of North Sumatra Province in North Sumatra District 1. (Moktar, Interview, February 20, 2017; General Election Commission of North Sumatra Province, 2014)

Ferdinan Godang (Godang) was born in Medan. He has a bachelor's degree in economics from

ST. Thomas University in Medan. Since his childhood era, Godang grew up in Medan, it can be seen from his elementary education history until high school that was taken in Medan. Godang's activities are implemented through Indonesian Chinese Social Clan Association (PSMTI). His socio-economic background is working in private sector as entrepreneur. Godang has a long political background in party membership. In 2004 election Godang joined to Partai Demokrat (PD), in 2009 he joined to PKPI and in 2014 he joined to PDIP (North Sumatra Province General Election Commission, 2004, 2009, 2014)

Sonny Firdaus (Firdaus) was born and lived in Medan City. His educational background is a Bachelor in Law of Darma Agung University in Medan. Firdaus works in the private sector and became the member of 2009 Regional House of Representative of North Sumatra Province from Partai Perjuangan Indonesia Baru (PPIB). Other Chinese ethnic is Sanny Joan Salim (Salim), a woman who was born in Bagansiapiapi, Riau Province, but took formal elementary school education to a college in Medan. Salim lives in Medan. Therefore, Salim's social activities and interaction are mostly performed in Medan (General Election Commission of North Sumatra Province, 2014).

Chinese ethnic competition in Regional House of Representative (DPRD) of North Sumatra Province member Election in 2014, in North Sumatra 1 electoral district included 11 sub-districts which are all in Medan. Therefore, the competition between Chinese ethnic is actually a competition to obtain vote from urban voter segmentation. Medan is North Sumatra Capital that focuses the industrial and trade sector as the regional government main revenue. These characteristics make Chinese ethnic prefer to choose Medan as a place to live while opening a business (shop/business) because generally Chinese ethnics work as traders [31]. Disagreed with the argument that 70% of Indonesia's economy is controlled by Chinese ethnic. According to Chong, in the reform era, Chinese ethnics dominate the manufacturing (industrial), food and hotel industries. While construction business is belongs to youth organization that have connection to local governments. So, according to Chong, it would be more appropriate to say that Chinese ethnics dominate the private economic sector [31].

In 2014 North Sumatera Province election there were 5 Chinese ethnic people who compete in North Sumatra 1. A political party that brings the Chinese ethnic are Partai Keadilan and Persatuan Indonesia (PKPI), Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP) and Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Gerindra). The spread of party based political channels among ethnic Chinese candidates is a consequence of the direct proportional election system. It will be different under the authoritarian regime system [16] where the minorities have loyalty on collective attitude.

The political field based on the political background of each Chinese ethnic candidate indicates that some Chinese ethnic individuals act as what [16] called as *Ethnic Attractors* to join the Regional House of

Representative member election. The complete information regarding the party and all the Chinese candidates is as follow:

**Table-1: Chinese Ethnic Candidates Based on Political Parties Involved in 2014 Regional House of Representative Member Election**

No	Political Parties	Candidate Name	Number
1	PKPI	Haryanto, SH	1
		Sanny Joan Salim, SE	7
2	PDIP	Brilliant Moktar, SE.,MM	1
		Ferdinand Godang, SE.,SH	8
3	Gerindra	Sonny Firdaus, SH	4

Source: General Election Commission of North Sumatra Province 2014.

The table above indicates 5 candidates who are competing to obtain voters in North Sumatra 1 Electoral District, covering 11 sub-districts in Medan administration area. Chinese ethnic electoral behavior in General Election leads to flexible behavior manifested by Chinese ethnic into several political parties [16]. Political parties place their cadres in legislative positions [32], and the legislative recruitment is conducted by political parties in North Sumatra Province with open pattern [33].

Total number of voters in North Sumatra Province is 9,819,458 people, this number is divided into two types of voters, Fixed Voter List (DPT) with 9,736,747 people and 82,711 Special Voter List (DPK). DPK is unregistered voters in DPT. Specifically, voters in North Sumatra 1 electoral district is 1,045,309 voters from the total number of DPT, DPK, Additional Voter List (DPTb) and Special Additional Voter List (DKTb). In addition, not all voters use their voting right in General Election, General Election Commission of North Sumatra Province data indicates that the number of voters who use their voting right is 560,434 (53.61%) and those who do not use are 46.38% (General Election Commission of North Sumatra Province, 2014). This figure indicates that people participation in North Sumatra 1 Electoral District does not reach the maximum participation rate. From 560,434 voters, there was 36,163 invalid votes and 524,271 valid votes (General Election Commission of North Sumatra Province, 2014). Invalid voting occurred due to several causes such as not choosing on ballots and choosing more than one option on the ballot.

**Strategy to Win Voting in North Sumatra Electoral District 1: Social, Political and Economic Network.**

On 2014 North Sumatra Provincial House of Representative Electoral Region 1 covered 11 Sub-districts in Medan area. In 2014 election, Medan is divided into 2 electoral districts, North Sumatra 1 electoral district covered 11 sub-districts in Medan and

North Sumatra 2 electoral districts covered 10 sub-districts in Medan. The 5 Chinese candidates competed in North Sumatra Electoral District 1 to win voting in 11 sub-districts in Medan. According to data of Medan General Election Commission (KPU), the number of voters in Medan in 2014 General Election was 1,731,891 voters in 21 sub-districts. Here are the details in all sub-districts in North Sumatra Electoral District 1: Amplas 109,622 (6.32%), Area 86,920 (5.01%), Belawan 72,501 (4.18%), Deli 114,712 (6.62%), Denai 122,163 (7.05%), Kota 73,317 (4.23%), Labuhan 83,365 (4.81%), Marelan 88,865 (5.13%), Perjuangan 91,283 (5.27%), Tembung 91,378 (5.28%), East 86,606 (5.00%).

Each sub-district in the electoral district has a different social demographic background which involves the segmentation of voters, religion, ethnicity, local institution, and social organization. On the other hand, the actors in political power structure play a strategic role to expand the vote support. In general, Chinese ethnics in Medan have a professional background as economic actors in private sector. From these activities, Chinese ethnics form their social interaction in the internal and external environment. The Chinese ethnic internal interaction occurs in the kinship system and their community organization while external interaction occurs through their activities as economic actors as well as their communication relationship with the employees.

By a small number of Chinese ethnic population, it is not enough for Chinese ethnic candidates to rely on voter support from their ethnic only, so that they seek support from the wide community. To obtain this support, they use their social, political, and economic network to attract the voters in a pluralistic environment. With Chinese ethnic profession that works mostly in the private economy, the use of economic network will work faster to obtain the voter support.

**Table-2: Total Voting of Chinese Ethnic Candidates in North Sumatra Electoral District 1 in 2014 Regional House of Representative of North Sumatra Province Member Election**



No	Sub-District	Candidate Name (Initial)				
		BM	FG	H	SF	SJS
1	Medan Amplas	631	125	75	393	8
2	Medan Area	6333	396	83	1436	30
3	Medan Belawan	449	103	36	267	8
4	Medan Deli	2367	223	97	699	28
5	Medan Denai	1473	204	190	608	10
6	Medan Kota	5031	232	53	1230	12
7	Medan Labuhan	729	197	91	312	26
8	Medan Marelan	988	102	95	329	11
9	Medan Perjuangan	3205	199	70	708	14
10	Medan Tembung	2994	221	45	688	10
11	East Medan	4931	345	123	1215	33
	Total	29,131	2,347	958	7885	190

Information: BM (Brilian Moktar), FG (Ferdinan Godang), H (Haryanto), SF (Sonny Firdaus), SJS (Sanny Joan Salim),  
Source: General Election Commission of North Sumatra Province 2014.

The table indicates that all Chinese ethnic candidates obtained voted in each sub-district in North Sumatra Electoral District 1 but with different amounts of vote. All Chinese ethnic have a strong background of social activities and interaction in Medan. This assumption is based on educational activities and domicile from each candidates in Medan City. It showed the tight the competition in North Sumatra electoral district 1. To obtain the vote, every Chinese ethnic begins their approach in their social environment such as family and friends in each electoral district as [16] related to the ethnic approach. After this approach is considered to be maximized, they move to the external environment, the vote source of other ethnic groups through their individual and socio-economic networks. The greater socio-political and economic networks owned by Chinese ethnic, the greater the potential to obtain vote, this state is discovered in Moktar and Firdaus who have broad socio-political and economic background and all affects the broad network.

From the number of vote, it indicates that Moktar and Firdaus achieve large vote. From the small number of Chinese ethnic population and the total votes of each Chinese candidate in North Sumatra electoral district 1, it is certain that these votes come from Chinese ethnic voters and other ethnic voters (the wide community). The support by voters to Moktar and Firdaus related to the positive actions they have done for the general public for a long time in North Sumatra Electoral District 1 by putting their effort for the interests of wide community, as a result they obtain a mutual trust from the voters.

## CONCLUSION

The experience of a number of individuals who had been involved in 2004 and 2009 election of Regional House of Representative of North Sumatra Province and the expanding social-political and economic networks create some Chinese ethnics to act as Ethnic Attractors to compete in 2014 Regional House of Representative of North Sumatra Province Election.

This research finds that Moktar and Haryanto have a role as *Ethnic Attractors*. This is common and it indicates the process of democracy and political education in ethnic internal environment by attracting the closest people to the internal community to stand as Regional House of Representative of North Sumatra Province Candidates.

The Chinese ethnic candidate competition in Regional House of Representative of North Sumatra Province member election indicates that Chinese ethnic electoral behavior is in the form of flexible behavior. This behavior is formed due to the basis in achieving individual goals in the long terms After the General Election period, the cohesion behavior slowly loosens and forms social and political division among Chinese ethnics. This state is reflected by the emergence of the new Chinese society organizations as well as creating new figures. This is in line with what [16] said that ethnic electoral behavior theory is divided into three forms, namely: 1) cohesion, 2) flexibility, and 3) social and political division.

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