

# Voting behavior in mayoral election: A case study in Sibolga city, Indonesia



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**Abstract** Political identity is not considered a threat in Indonesia's democratic climate, particularly in local politics (Regent/Mayor/Governor Elections). The role of political identities is inseparable from local politics. Campaign issues and political marketing strategies that emphasize "Political Identity" have been shown to influence electorate behavior positively and reduce the reliance on monetary incentives. This study aims to assess the impact of tribal and religious-political identities on voter behavior in Sibolga City during the 2020 Mayoral Election. A survey method with a quantitative approach and correlation analysis was employed. The research was conducted in 4 subdistricts and 17 villages within Sibolga City, with a sample size of 399 participants. The findings indicate that the influence of religious political identities on voter behavior in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election was 0.546. Additionally, the influence of tribal political identities on voter behavior was found to be 0.27, indicating a moderate impact. It was observed that religious political identities had a more significant influence than tribal identities in determining voter choices in Sibolga City's 2020 Mayoral Election.

**Keywords:** politic identity, ethnic, religion, voter behavior, Sibolga

## 1. Introduction

Identity politics has always been considered an obstacle to the development of democracy in Indonesia, and the similarity of religion, ethnicity, and regional origin has always been an issue in regional head elections in Indonesia. Researchers see that democracy in Indonesia cannot be separated from identity politics such as democracy in Europe and America, where anyone can run for regional heads in a region without considering the similarities in religion, ethnicity, or regional origin with voters in the area. However, Democracy in Indonesia cannot be separated from the similarity of religion, ethnicity, and regional origin/local man, especially in local elections, which are the determining variables for voting public.

Indeed, religion as a political identity has been a challenge to Indonesian democracy. There is a great deal of discourse about Indonesia's vulnerability to religion-based identities: from the community conflicts in Maluku that spread to other parts of Eastern and Central Indonesia, where Christian groups blamed radical Islamists for trying to put forward a national Islamic agenda and there was visible involvement of Laskar Jihad fighters (Rabasa & Haseman, 2002), the Jemaah Islamiyah network that is a jihadist movement within Indonesia (Barton, 2005), to movements that sanctify society as found in some parts of Indonesia (Kolig, 2005), as well as insurgencies from the past such as Darul Islam that never truly died out (Temby, 2010). The majority of voters may favor secular political parties, i.e., parties that prefer to be identified as loyal to Pancasila (which means five principles in Sanskrit), as shown by Mujani & Liddle (2009).

The use of religious issues in the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2017 was a stark reminder that good governance performance alone does not guarantee electoral outcomes, especially when opponents use religious sentiments to garner support. Despite widespread satisfaction with improved public services and facilities, when he took over as governor to replace the previous governor, Joko Widodo, who became President, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, was subsequently imprisoned on blasphemy charges. Thus, the challenge is not just a matter of tolerance or intolerance but also how a leader responds to campaign pressures; there are also elements of Islamic radicalism, hate speech, and mass mobilization in the streets to ensure the outcome (Wisnu, 2019).

Researchers disagree with the above view because identity politics in Indonesia, in addition to being inseparable from the similarities in religion, ethnicity and regional origin that have been attached as national identities, also has other positive things, including identity politics that can increase public political participation and suppress money politics in local elections, this research focuses on the 2020 Sibolga mayoral election. This is in line with the opinion of Putra (2019) as follows: Islamic populism is a natural criticism in a democratic country such as Indonesia. It is a healthy counter and even a legitimate and legal part of a country that adheres to the principles of law and justice. This is a challenge for Indonesia. Treating Indonesia's Islamic



populism as treason and a threat is an exaggerated assumption that is not supported by historical reality or today's political reality (Putra, 2019).

Sibolga Community condition was said to be the compound because several ethnicities lived in Sibolga, a city called "The Land of Multiple Ethnic." Some of the races that have been in Sibolga include Toba, Mandailing, Malay, Nias, Javanese, Minang, Bugis, Acehnese, and other tribes from eastern Indonesia. In addition, some foreign immigrants, such as ethnic Chinese, Indians, and Arabs, live side-by-side peacefully and respect each other, but the Batak ethnic group becomes major in Sibolga (Tengku, 1981).

The front entry of the Batak ethnic group into Sibolga was carried out between the people of the interior and the coastal community of Sibolga: Ompu Hurinjom Hutagalung, a person from Silindung who built the settlement in the Simaminggir area. Simaminggir is an area close to Bonan Dolok located 10 km north of Sibolga. The location is at an altitude of 1,266 m above sea level; it is directly located in Tapan Nauli Bay, and the site serves as a stopover for people who travel to the West Coast.

In Sibolga tradition, the regional or Batak language is rarely used for daily pronunciation, especially for people on the coast. People are more inclined to use coastal languages. This coastal language is a community communication tool for conveying purpose, either orally or in writing. People in Central Tapanuli and Sibolga widely use the coastal language. The role of coastal language has become the language of instruction in various activities of the Sibolga community, both in everyday language and traditional ceremonies and other ceremonies such as wedding ceremonies. This coastal language is part of the culture in Sibolga, namely, the Sumando ethnicity. Sumando is a unit of space culture of the coastal tribe Sibolga, consisting of coastal language, ethnicity on the coast, coastal arts, and typical coastal food (Panggabean, 1995).

The sumando custom is the addition and mixing of one other family in the faith with the bond of marriage rope according to Islam and is validated via coastal, traditional ceremonies. Sumando people mean that Maka is a son-in-law, brother-in-law or brother-in-law who has become his own family. Everything worse becomes a responsibility with the Sumando people. The view of life and the bond of the public coastal city are extreme, and kinship Sumando is a path unite brotherhood, which is why no customary decision was made without involving the deliberation of all members. In general, this familiar conducive climate is the capital of coastal communities in terms of successful Sibolga development.

The General Election Commission (KPU) of Sibolga City has completed the Sibolga Regional Head Election (Pilkada) 2020. As a result, the number 1 candidate, Jamaluddin Pohan-Pantas Maruba Lumban Tobing (JP), became the election winner. This candidate, Jamaluddin Pohan-Pantas Maruba (JP), received 27.494 votes from 51.826 total valid votes, with as many as 64.329 Permanent Voter List (DPT) votes. The second candidate, Bahdinnur Tanjung-Edi Polo Sitanggang (ABADI), has 13.848 votes, and Pair Number 3, Ahmad Sulhan Sitompul-Edward Siahaan (ASSED), has 9.985 votes (KPU Sibolga, 2020).

On the basis of data from 4 subdistricts, the number 1 candidates Jamaluddin Pohan-Pantas Maruba Lumban Tobing (JP) in North Sibolga District managed to receive 6.920 votes, Sibolga Kota 5.088 votes, Sibolga Sambas 6.393 votes and South Sibolga 9.093 votes. The second Candidate, Bahdinnur Tanjung-Edi Polo Sitanggang (ABADI), in North Sibolga District received 3.755 votes, Sibolga Kota received 1.877 votes, Sibolga Sambas received 2.953 votes, and South Sibolga received 5.263 votes. Furthermore, the Number 3 candidate Ahmad Sulhan Sitompul-Edward Siahaan (ASSED) in North Sibolga District received 1.646 votes, Sibolga Kota 2.125 votes, Sibolga Sambas 2.482 votes, and South Sibolga 3.732 votes (KPU Sibolga, 2020).

The research conducted by Irfan in the Dissertation in 2020 with the title "BATAK PEOPLE AND URANG PASISI IN SIBOLGA: A study on Political Identities in the 2015-2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election" revealed that the contest of culture and religion in the Sibolga election process focuses on religion for Batak residents who are Muslim and the value of kinship culture for Batak residents Non-Muslim. For adherents of Islam, Al-Qur'an teachings are often used as a reference in determining their political choices. Residents outside Islam certainly dislike this because if political identities apply such as this, followers of religious minorities will inevitably never obtain the opportunity to be elected leaders through the direct democratic process. In contrast to the population whose religion becomes a minority population, faiths are very much applied in all joints of life, including politics (Irfan, 2020).

The local culture in Sibolga is a coastal culture and batak culture that has been tested since the beginning of religious contestation. Coastal culture colored by Islamic culture eventually consolidated into a population that highlighted the religion of Islam, and Batak culture, which Christianity had colored, crystallized into a population that highlighted the religion of Christianity/Catholicism.

According to (Arifin & Ritonga, 2020), the influence of political identity on the tolerance of people in Pematangsiantar city during the Governors Sumatera Utara Election in 2018. The results show that the correlation between the political identity variable and the tolerance of people in Pematangsiantar city in the 2018 Sumatra Utara governor election is (-0.120), which is very weak, negative, and significant and has a two-way significance value or sig (2-tailed) of 0.017 because the number of significance values is  $0.017 < 0.05$ . This illustrates that political identity has a weak influence on the tolerance of the Pematangsiantar city community in social life; if political identity is high, then the social tolerance of the community will be low (intolerance still occurs in differences in choice owing to the politics of identity/ethnicity, religion, and regional origin); however, if identity politics is low in the 2018 Sumatera Utara governor election, then social tolerance will be high. In conclusion, the people of Pematangsiantar city, which is known as the "Tolerant City", cannot be separated from the influence of political identity in the 2018 Sumatra Utara Governor Election.

Padmi & Ningrum (2022), title: *Politics of identity and Black Lives Matter movement in Joe Biden – Kamala Harris’s political campaigns during the U.S. general election 2020*. Result: *The politics of identity and the Black Lives Matter movement became political dynamics for African Americans seeking aspiration and political justice. However, the politics of identity and the Black Lives Matter movement were used as political tools to gain votes during the election. This study was conducted with a qualitative research method and a literature review. This study revealed that there was a connection between the politics of identity and the Black Lives Matter movement and Biden–Harris’s political campaign. Compared with Donald Trump, these candidates emerged as more sympathetic and caring candidates for the black community and other people with colors. This was one of the influential factors for people to vote for Biden–Harris in the U.S. General Election in 2020.*

The "rainbow" pairing of two religions is a religious and cultural strategy used to gain political power. This happens because, in the community, there is a segregation of voters. The public tends to choose a leader in harmony with him; namely, Islamic voters select their Muslim leaders, as do Kristen/Colic voters. This is an excellent political marketing strategy.

The importance of this research lies in the field of social humanities, especially local political studies regarding the identity politics of candidate pairs carried out by political parties. This study is important and interesting because, thus far, identity politics has always been considered the enemy of democracy because it dwarfs the value of democracy if the similarity of religion, ethnicity, and regional origin is a requirement for someone to be nominated as a regent/mayor/governor in Indonesia. The reality in the field is that the elements of identity politics cannot be separated in every contestation of regional head elections in Indonesia (Hall, 2005). This research offers a win–win solution to political parties supporting regional head candidates, political cadres and regional head candidates who are interested in competing in local politics for regent/mayor/governor elections, considering the identity politics of religious, ethnic and regional origin similarities as one of the requirements of certain candidates who will become regional head candidates (Efriza, 2012).

The purpose of this research is to argue that identity politics is a barrier to democracy in Indonesia. The results of this study can provide an understanding and acceptance of identity politics that must be understood as part of democracy in Indonesia, especially in regional head elections, both the elections of mayors and deputy mayors and the elections of governors and deputy governors in Indonesia. This research also aims to provide input for political parties in the process of party regeneration and nomination of regeneration on the basis of the identity and ethnography of the region.

## 2. Research Hypothesis

The hypotheses in this study are as follows:

1.  $H_0: p=0$  Religious and ethnic political identities do not affect the voting behavior of the people of Sibolga City in the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020.

2.  $H_a: p \neq 0$  Religious and ethnic political identities affect the voting behavior of the people of Sibolga City in the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020.

The politics of religious and ethnic identity in the election of the Sibolga Mayor Elections is interesting research because the people of Sibolga City are mixed immigrants (Minang, Malay, Batak) who form a new identity or coastal community coupled with the influence of Islam and Christianity in the development of their daily lives. This day is a determinant of the community's choice of the 2020 Mayoral election.

## 3. Methods

Quantitative research is a type of educational research in which researchers determine or decide what to study; use specific questions; narrow questions; collect quantitative data from participants; analyze these numbers via statistics; and conduct objective data collection (Neuman, 2006). According to (Creswell, 2018), this type of P-research research is directed at determining whether there are differences in the aspects or variables studied between two or more of the two groups. In this study, there was no control of variables, not manipulation/treatment, from researchers (Sukmadinata, 2013).

The research approach used in this research is quantitative, with a type of correlation that aims to calculate the magnitude of the influence of religious and ethnic political identities on the behavior of community voters in the 2020 Sibolga City Mayoral Election. This research will be conducted in Sibolga city, which covers four subdistricts and 17 villages. "A population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristic." Populations are groups of individuals who have similar characteristics (Creswell, 2018).

The population in this study included people who registered on the Permanent Voter List (DPT) of the Regional Election Commission (KPU Kota Sibolga) and exercised their voting rights in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election, with as many as 64.115 people. (KPU.go.id)

"The sample is the group of participants in a study selected from the target population the researcher generalizes to the target population" (Creswell, 2018). The sample is part of a population-representative study.

The sample used in this research was Taro Yamane's formula.

Information:

$n =$  Sample searched

N = Research population  
 d = precision (5%)

$$n = \frac{N}{N \times (d)^2 + 1}$$

$$n = \frac{64.329}{64.329 \times (0,05)^2 + 1}$$

$$n = \frac{64.329}{162}$$

n = 399 respondents

Sample withdrawal techniques are used so that the distribution of sample dispersal is distributed for representation validity. Because of the distribution of respondents using villages in Sibolga city, researchers have used a multiproportional-stage random sampling (Table 1) technique with the following formula:

$$n1 = \frac{N1}{N} \times n$$

Keterangan:

- n1 = Sample searched in strata 1
- N = Accumulation of population
- N1 = Population in strata 1
- n = a predetermined sample of research

**Table 1** Proportional multistage random sampling.

Subdistrict	Urban Village	Population	Sample
Kota Sibolga	Kota Beringin	1.740	11
	Pasar Baru	1.386	9
	Pasar Belakang	4.339	27
Sibolga Utara	Pancuran Gerobak	3.963	24
	Huta Barangan	1.685	10
	Angin Nauli	2,896	18
	Huta Tonga-Tonga	2.171	13
	Sibolga Hilir	4.636	29
Sibolga Selatan	Simare-mare	3.997	25
	Aek Habil	4.765	29
	Aek Manis	7.007	43
	Aek Muara Pinang	3.710	23
Sibolga Sambas	Aek Parombunan	7.079	44
	Pancuran Kerambil	2.258	14
	Pancuran Dewa	3.674	23
	Pancuran Pinang	3.499	21
	Pancuran Bambu	5.524	34
Total (64.115)		64.329	399

**4. Results**

The table 2 above illustrates the characteristics of the respondents on the basis of the gender distribution across 17 villages from 4 subdistricts in Pematangsiantar city. A total of 244 male or 61.2% and 155 female or 38.8% of the respondents in this study were male and female, respectively. The characteristic division obtained from the research is part of the sampling technique. The first thing is to go to the person who came out his name into a research sample. The difference in the number of characteristics of respondents on the basis of the gender of respondents is the result of a collection of data collected via random sampling stratified.

**Table 2** Gender of the respondents.

Informant	Frequency	%
Male	244	61,2
Female	155	38,8
Total	399	100,0

Source: Results from researcher data in 2020 via SPSS 24.



Similarly, the job characteristics (Table 3) of research respondents are part of the research sampling technique used to collect research data. The results in the table above describe the multiple types of work of the research respondents and represent various types of jobs that exist in the community of Pematangsiantar city. The table above shows that the majority of the respondents are entrepreneurs, as many as 155 people, or 38.8%, and the minority are retirees, as many as four people, or 1.0%, with other types of work divided evenly in terms of both the kind and percentage of research respondents. Thus, the characteristic division of community research respondents in Sibolga city on the basis of the type of work was represented in this study.

**Table 3** Respondents' job.

Information	Frequency	%
Farmer	15	3,8
Housewife	43	10,8
Student	77	19,3
PNS (Civil Servent)	25	6,3
Entrepreneurial	155	38,8
Private Employees	49	12,3
Teacher/Lecturer	11	2,8
Pensioner	4	1,0
No/Not Working	20	5,0
Total	399	100,0

*Source:* Researcher data from 2021 obtained via SPSS 24.

The table 4 above shows the last level of education of the research respondents. The majority of the respondents' previous education was high school graduation or equivalent to 311 people or 77.9%, and the lowest percentage was elementary school education, with as many as six people or 1.5%. The table above also shows the composition of the education level of the respondents who graduated from a bachelor's degree as many as 35 people or 8.8%. The data above are the result of the distribution of research respondents in 17 existing villages from 4 subdistricts in Sibolga city.

**Table 4** Respondents' last education.

Information	Frequency	%
Finish junior high school	31	7,8
High school finish	311	77,9
End of Diploma	16	4,0
Graduated Bachelor	35	8,8
End of SD	6	1,5
Total	399	100,0

*Source:* Researcher data from 2021 obtained via SPSS 24.

On the basis of the table 5 above, known income research is related to the type of work respondents presented in the previous table 3 and 4. The income of most of the respondents ranged from Rp.1000,001--Rp.2000,000 (as many as 114 respondents or 28.6%), and at least from Rp.000,001--Rp.7,000,000 in one month. The distribution of the respondents' income results indicates that the majority of the respondents in this study are people of the lower middle economic class, although there are also representations from the people of Sibolga city from the middle and upper economies in terms of monthly income. This illustrates that the characteristics of the distribution of research respondents on the basis of income have been well spread because it already represents the community of Sibolga city from the lower, middle and upper economies.

**Table 5** Respondents' income/month.

Information	Frequency	%
No income	147	36,8
Rp.1,000,001-Rp.2,000,000	114	28,6
Rp.2,000,001-Rp.3,000,000	69	17,3
Rp.3.000.001-Rp.4,000,000	36	9,0
Rp.4.000.001-Rp.5,000,000	23	5,8
Rp.5.000.001-Rp.6,000,000	6	1,5
Rp.6.000.001-Rp.7,000,000	4	1,0
Total	399	100,0

*Source:* Researcher data from 2021 obtained via SPSS 24.

The Table 6 above illustrates the religion embraced by the study respondents, which becomes important because it is related to the political identities of the voting community or research respondents in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election. When viewed in the table above, the respondents who were the greatest proportion of Protestants amounted to 264 people, or

66.2%, while the respondents who were the lowest proportion were Buddhist, as many as 2 people, or 0.5%. At the same time, as many as 118 people or 29.6% of the respondents are Muslim, and as many as 15 people or 3.8% are Catholic. This is because of data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Sibolga city regarding the number of believers in Sibolga city, and on the basis of the BPS results, as many as 55% of sibolga city people are Christian and 40% are Islamic. The results in the table above are the research results obtained via research sampling techniques and multilevel randomization. The results of the research in the table above follow the composition of religious communities in the city of Sibolga so that they can be considered valid and reliable because the distribution of research data on the representation of respondents from religious believers in Sibolga city has been represented. Political identity with religious similarity follows the hypothesis of researchers that the poitik identity of religious similarity affects the choices of the people of Sibolga City in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election.

**Table 6** Respondent's Religion.

Information	Frequency	%
Protestant	264	66,2
Islam	118	29,6
Catholic	15	3,8
Buddhist	2	,5
Total	399	100,0

*Source:* Results from researcher data in 2021 obtained via SPSS 24.

The table 7 above also became important to note because it was part of political identity in the study. Ethnicity is an important indicator after religion in political identity is most dominant in every local politics, whether it is the election of regents/mayors or governor elections. The table above shows that the majority of the respondents to the study are Toba tribes, as many as 200 people or 50.1%, followed by Javanese tribes, as many as 125 people or 31.3%, the Simalungun tribe and the Mandailing tribe, as many as 32 people or 8.0%, and other minority tribes in this study, such as the Mining Tribe, the Nias Tribe, and the Tionghua tribe, as many as 2 people or 0.5%.

**Table 7** Respondents' Tribe/Ethnicity.

Information	Frequency	%
Toba	200	50,1
Javanese	125	31,3
Simalungun	32	8,0
Karo	2	,5
Mandailing	32	8,0
Minang	2	,5
Nias	2	,5
Minang	2	,5
Tionghua	2	,5
Total	399	100,0

*Source:* Results from researcher data in 2021 obtained via SPSS 24.

According to the BPS data of Sibolga city, there is a conformity between the composition of the dominant tribe in Sibolga city and the data of the results of the research obtained; this is also the case for the characteristics of the respondents on the basis of religion, as shown in Table 5. The early tribes in Pematangsiantar city were coastal tribes because the history of the formation of Sibolga city was part of the administrative area of Central Tapanuli Regency, but now, even the coastal tribe/ethnicity in Sibolga city has shifted to include tribes of Toba and Javanese immigrants. Therefore, it is natural that the Toba tribe dominates in Sibolga city. The Javanese and Mandailing, as communities of immigrants, settled in the city of Sibolga, as do the Javanese tribes, which cannot be underestimated in the city of Sibolga; however, as immigrants, the Javanese tribe can be said to be quite large and can be juxtaposed with indigenous tribes such as the coastal Tribe/Ethnic and other immigrant tribes, such as the Toba tribe, mandailing tribes/ethnics.

The table 8 above shows that all respondents to the study exercised their voting rights or voted in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election. Thus, all research respondents are entitled to provide answers in this study because all respondents who are entitled to provide answers in this study are respondents who followed or voted in the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020.

**Table 8** Vote in Mayor Election Sibolga Year 2020.

Information	Frequency	%
YES	399	100,0
Total	399	100,0

*Source:* Results from researcher data in 2020 via SPSS 24.

The table 9 above clearly shows that the choices of the research respondents in the Sibolga Mayoral election in 2020 were mostly religious, social, cultural, etc., which were answered by as many as 299 people or 54.9%, and the respondents



who answered chose the vision, mission, and candidate pair as many as 106 respondents or 26.6%. The respondents who answered voted in the Sibolga Mayoral election in 2020 due to the track record of candidate pairs and the performance of previous candidate pairs each answered as many as 52 respondents or 5.5%.

**Table 9** Reasons to Vote in Mayor Election Sibolga Year 2020.

Information	Frequency	%
Religious/Social/Cultural Similarities, etc.	219	54,9
Vision, Mission, candidate pair	106	26,6
Track Record of Prospective Spouses	52	13,0
Previous Candidate Pair Performance	22	5,5
Total	399	100,0

Source: Result with researcher data from 2021 via SPSS 24.

The table 10 above shows that the source of information for research respondents is political information about the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020; the most common source of information is online mass media, with as many as 223 respondents or 55.9%, followed by sources of information from television media, with 128 people or 32.1%, and newspaper media, with as many as 48 people or 12.0%. This shows that the most effective information media in local political campaigns uses the online mass media that are most widely accessed by the people of Sibolga city in seeking information about the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020.

**Table 10** Source of Politic/Local Election information.

Information	Frequency	%
Newspaper	48	12,0
Online Mass Media	223	55,9
Television	128	32,1
Total	399	100,0

Source: Results obtained by a data researcher in 2021 via SPSS 24.

The table 11 above illustrates the frequency with which respondents access political information about the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020. Most respondents answered 2--3 times in one week (157 respondents or 39.3%), followed by 4--5 times in one week (106 respondents or 26.6%). This shows that the people of Sibolga City are quite politically literate, as they look at the frequency in one week to find political information about the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020.

**Table 11** Accessing political information in one week.

Information	Frequency	%
Every day of the week	46	11,5
2-3 times in one week	157	39,3
2-4 times in one week	90	22,6
4-5 times in one week	106	26,6
Total	399	100,0

Source: Results from researcher data in 2021 obtained via SPSS 24.

The table 12 above shows that the respondents answered the most choosing candidates in the Sibolga Mayoral election in 2020 because of religious similarities, with as many as 174 respondents or 43.6% agreeing, and strongly agree with as many as 77 respondents or 19.3% agree; if they agree and strongly agree with 251 respondents, 62.9% agree. The majority of respondents' answers indicate that identity by bringing religious issues cannot be separated in the local politics of the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020.

**Table 12** Choosing a candidate pair in Mayor Election Sibolga City, 2020, based on religious equality.

Information	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	10	2,5
Disagree	138	34,6
Agree	174	43,6
Strongly Agree	77	19,3
Total	399	100,0

Source: Result with researcher data from 2021 via SPSS 24.

The result is clearly apparent from the answers of the respondents who chose candidate pairs in the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020, as ethnic/tribal equality is most common, with the answer agreed-upon being answered by as many as 180 people or 45.1%, and the respondents who answered strongly agreed with as many as 60 people or 15% of the total number of respondents who answered voted in the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020 with the same tribe of 240 respondents or 60.1%, which explains why the similarity of tribes is still far inferior to the similarity of religion in the local political political identities



of the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020. However, if the political identities of religious similarities with tribal/ethnic similarities are combined in the political identity campaign of candidates in 2020, Sibolga Mayoral Election will greatly affect the people/choices of Sibolga city (Table 13).

**Table 13** Choosing a candidate pair in Mayor Election Sibolga City, 2020, based on ethnic/tribal similarities.

Information	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	6	1,5
Disagree	153	38,3
Agree	180	45,1
Strongly Agree	60	15,0
Total	399	100,0

Source: Results from researcher data in 2021 obtained via SPSS 24.

The results are clearly shown in the table 14 above; as many as 206 respondents or 51.6% of respondents answered strongly disagree answers, and as many as 4 respondents or 1.0% answered strongly disagree to choose a candidate pair in the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020 due to the origin of the birth area/local man of the candidate's spouse's spouse. This means that 52.6% of the respondents did not agree to choose candidates on the basis of regional origin or local man in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election.

**Table 14** Choosing a candidate partner in the Mayor Election Sibolga City, 2020, based on the origin of the birth area or local man.

Information	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	4	1,0
Disagree	206	51,6
Agree	131	32,8
Strongly Agree	58	14,5
Total	399	100,0

Source: Result from researcher data in 2021 via SPSS 24.

The table 15 above shows that the respondents answered the most to choose a candidate in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election because it was supported by a preferred political party or the choice of voters, with a strongly agreed-upon answer of 170 respondents or 42.6% and a strongly agreed-upon answer of 42 respondents or 10.5%. Overall, 212 respondents, or 53.1% of respondents, agreed and strongly agreed with the candidate pair voters in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election. This approach is supported by a preferred political party or a political party of voter choice. This illustrates that political parties are still a reference choice in choosing the pair of candidates for the head of the region in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election.

**Table 15** Choosing a candidate pair in the Mayor Election Sibolga City Year 2020 base supported by a preferred political party or voter choice.

Information	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	75	18,8
Disagree	112	28,1
Agree	170	42,6
Strongly Agree	42	10,5
Total	399	100,0

Source: Results from researcher data in 2021 obtained via SPSS 24.

The table 16 above illustrates that the people of Sibolga City are quite politically literate, which is based on the answers of the respondents, who say that by choosing a candidate pair because of their vision, the mission of the candidate pair is answered by the majority of the respondents, with an agreed-upon answer of 228 people or 57.1%, and the answer strongly agrees with as many as 133 respondents or 33.3%, if as many as 361 respondents who agree and strongly agree to choose the candidate's spouse in the Mayoral Election are combined. Sibolga Year 2020, owing to its vision, is the mission of the candidate pair. This is reversed when viewed from the answers of previous respondents related to political identity. However, other researchers make assumptions other than political identity, which affects the choices of the people of Sibolga city, the people of Sibolga city are also politically literate by looking at and considering the vision and mission of the candidate pair he elected as the Mayor of Sibolga in 2020. From the results of previous research, it is clear that political identity cannot be separated from local politics, but people who see and consider this vision, the mission of the candidate pair in the Mayor of Sibolga in 2020 can be said to be politically literate even though it is still dominated by political identity. This is an input for political party administrators as supporters of regional head candidate pairs. In addition to considering political identity, the proposing party must also consider the figure of candidates who have a vision and a clear mission and can be conveyed to the community.

The table 17 above shows that money politics does not occur in Sibolga city. In reality, money politics always occur in every regional head election event but are not significant in the 2020 Sibolga Mayor's office. This can be seen from the answers of the respondents who chose a candidate pair because they were given money (money politics) and answered the most, with



as many as 251 or 63.0% disagree, as many as 86 or 21.6% strongly disagree, respectively. If combined, 337 respondents disagreed or 84.4% disagreed with money politics, which can affect people's choice of Sibolga city in the 2020 Sibolga Mayor's Office. This becomes very interesting because, thus far, researchers are always looking for a formula for eliminating money politics in general elections, especially in regional head elections that are thick with money politic practices.

**Table 16** Choosing a candidate pair because of Vision, mission of the candidate pair.

Information	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	6	1,5
Disagree	32	8,0
Agree	228	57,1
Strongly Agree	133	33,3
Total	399	100,0

Source: Results of 2021 researcher data analysis via SPSS 24.

**Table 17** Choosing a candidate's spouse because it is given money/goods/promised position or other things (money politics).

Information	Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	86	21,6
Disagree	251	63,0
Agree	54	13,4
Strongly Agree	8	2,0
Total	399	100,0

Source: Results from researcher data in 2020 via SPSS 24.

#### 4.1.1 Influence of political identity (tribal/ethnic) on the choice of Sibolga city people in Sibolga city in 2020

According to the table 18 above, the Spearman correlation coefficient is 0.270. This means that the political variable of Tribal Identity has a sufficient correlation with people's choice of Sibolga city in the 2020 Sibolga city regional head election. Up 0.270 or sufficient and positive. The correlation has a two-way possibility (2-tailed).

From the table 18 above, the Spearman correlation coefficient is 0.546. This means that the variable religious political identity has a strong correlation/relationship with the choice of the Sibolga city community in Sibolga city in 2020, with a value of 0.546 or sufficient and positive. Correlation has a two-way (2-tailed) possibility.

**Table 18** Correlations of political identity with the Mayor Election Sibolga City in 2020.

Correlations			Political identities (Religion)	Selection Sibolga City Community in Sibolga City Election in 2020
Spearman's rho	Political identities (Religion)	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,546**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
	Sibolga City People's Choice in Sibolga City Election in 2020	Correlation Coefficient	,546**	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.
		N	399	399

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In terms of the direction (type) of the variable relationships of religious political identity with the choice of the people of Sibolga city in Sibolga city in 2020, the correlation coefficient figure in the table above is positive, namely, 0.546, such that the relationship between the two variables is two-way. Sibolga In elections, Sibolga year 2020 was high.

Look at the significance of the relationship between the two variables. On the basis of the output in the table 19 above, known significance values or Sigs are known. (2-tailed) of 0.000 because the significance number is 0.000 < 0.001. There is a significant relationship between dynastic political variables/kinship and the choice of Sibolga city community in Sibolga city elections in 2020. This means that the relationship between the two variables, namely, religious political identity and the choice of the people of Sibolga city in Sibolga city in 2020, is two-way or mutually influential. In conclusion, the correlations between the variables of religious political identity and the choice of Sibolga city people in Sibolga city in 2020 are strong, positive, significant, and two-way.

On the basis of the above, the hypothesis in this study has been answered. The initial hypotheses in this study are as follows:

1. Ho1 p=0 Religious political identity does not affect the choice of the Sibolga city community in Sibolga city elections in 2020.



2. Ha1:  $p \neq 0$  Religious political identity affects the choice of Sibolga city people in Sibolga city in 2020

To answer the above research hypothesis, the researchers compared the rating with the r table with the formula  $df (N-2, 0.05)$ . 'N' is the amount of sample data tested. After the formula is entered, the value of the table is searched. The R table =  $df (399-2)$ , with a margin of error  $(0.05)=0.098192$ , or the r table in population  $397 = 0.098192$ . The next r table in this study is 0.546. Thus, the table is  $(0.098192) < r \text{ count } (0.546)$ ; thus,  $H_0: p=0$  is rejected, and  $H_a: p \neq 0$  is accepted. This means that Politik Religious Identity has a strong influence on the choice of the Sibolga city community in the Sibolga city election in 2020.

**Table 19** Correlation strength values.

Correlation coefficient value 0.00-0.25	The relationship is very weak
Correlation coefficient value 0.26-0.50	Relationship Enough
Correlation coefficient value 0.51-0.75	Strong Relationships
Correlation coefficient value 0.76-0.99	Very Strong Relationships
Correlation coefficient value 1.00	Perfect Relationship

Source: (Sugiyono, 2017).

4.1.2 Influence of political identity (tribal/ethnic) on the choice of Sibolga city people in Sibolga city in 2020

From the table 20 above, the coefficient spearman correlation number is 0.270. This means that the political variable Identity of the Tribe has a sufficient correlation with the choices of the people of Sibolga city in Sibolga city in 2020. An increase of 0.270 or enough positive. Correlation has a two-way (2-tailed) possibility.

**Table 20** Correlations between political identity and the choices of the people in Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020.

Correlations			Tribal Political identity	Sibolga City People's Choice in Sibolga City Election in 2020
Spearman's rho	Tribal Political identity	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,270*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,027
		N	399	399
	Sibolga City People's Choice in Sibolga City Election in 2020	Correlation Coefficient	,270*	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,027	.
		N	399	399

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In terms of the direction (type) of the relationship of the political variables Identity of the tribe with the choice of the people of Sibolga city in the election of Sibolga city in 2020, the correlation coefficient number in the table above is negative, which is 0.270; thus, the relationship between the two variables is unidirectional. Enough between the politics of identity Tribe in The Choice of Sibolga City Community in Sibolga City Election in 2020.

Look at the significance of the relationship between the two variables. On the basis of the output in the table above, known significance values or Sigs are known. (2-tailed) by .017 because the significance number is  $0.017 < 0.05$ . Therefore, there is a significant relationship between the variables of political identity and the choice of the city of Sibolga in Sibolga city in 2020. This means that the relationship between the two variables, namely, Tribal Political identity, and the Sibolga city community in Sibolga City Election in 2020 is two-way or mutually affecting.

The conclusion was that the correlations between the variables of tribal political identity and the choice of the Sibolga city community in the Sibolga city election in 2020 are sufficient, positive, significant, and two-way.

Therefore, the hypothesis in this study is as follows:

1.  $H_0: p=0$  Tribal Political identity does not affect the Choice of Sibolga City People in the Sibolga City Election in 2020.
2.  $H_a: p \neq 0$  Tribal political identity affects the choice of the people of Sibolga city in Sibolga city in 2020.

To answer the research hypothesis above, the researcher's comparer was calculated with an r table with the formula  $df (N-2, 0.05)$ . 'N' is the amount of sample data tested. After the formula is entered, the table value in the table data r is searched.



$R_{table} = df(399-2, 0.05) = 0.098192$  or  $r_{table}$  in population 397 = 0.098192. The next  $r_{table}$  in this study is 0.270. Then, the table (0.098192) >  $r$  calculates (0.270); thus,  $H_0: p=0$  rejected and  $H_1: p \neq 0$  accepted. This means that tribal political identity affected the choice of Sibolga city people in Sibolga city in 2020. Thus, the people of Sibolga city are affected by religious issues and tribes in making choices in Sibolga city elections in 2020.

## 5. Discussion

In this study, identity politics is a combination of variables of religious similarity and ethnic similarity to the choice of the people of sibolga city in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election; the result of identity politics based on religious similarity is 0.586 (very strong), whereas that of ethnic similarity is 0.270 (very weak). Furthermore, 54.9% of the participants reported Voting in Mayor Election Sibolga Year 2020 Religious/Social/Cultural Similarities, etc. 54.9%. In addition, 240 respondents (60.1%) answered the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020 with the same tribe/ethnicity. This means that identity politics with religious similarities was far more influential than ethnic similarities in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election.

A total of 52.6% of the respondents did not agree to choose candidates on the basis of regional origin or local man in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election, and 53.1% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the candidate pair voters in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election. Because it is supported by a preferred political party or political party of the voter's choice, this illustrates that political parties are still a reference choice in choosing the pair of candidates for the head of the region in the 2020 Sibolga Mayoral Election. A total of 337 respondents disagreed or 84.4% disagreed with money politics, which can affect people's choice of Sibolga city in the 2020 Sibolga Mayor's Office. This becomes very interesting because researchers are always looking for a formula for eliminating money politics in general elections, especially in regional head elections that are thick with money political practices.

Identity politics can simply be interpreted as a political strategy that focuses on differentiating and utilizing primordial ties as its main category (Castells, 2010; Daulay, 2019). Identity politics can lead to tolerance and freedom, but identity politics can also lead to patterns of intolerance, verbal-physical violence and ethnic conflict in life. The problems of nationality came to the forefront again when the nation entered the era of democratization. This is related mainly to the presence of various expressions of the rise of primordialism in various regions that are based on ethnic values. As mentioned earlier, the nature of ethnicity itself basically encompasses an awareness that is based on a simple link, which often exceeds the issue of kinship. Other things, such as common interests, history, politics, globalization factors and the loosening of the government system, also strengthen ethnic consciousness. This book examines the extent to which ethnic sentiment has the potential to grow and become a threat to nationalism and Indonesianness. This is interesting to study because it could be that the tendency of the ethnic awakening phenomenon is a natural situation in our dynamically growing democracy. However, on the other hand, as an inherent part of the life of a nation, ideally, it should not mean a threat to the order of a nation (Syafuan et al., 2019).

Identity politics has always been considered a threat to the development of democracy in Indonesia by many political experts, political parties and political experts. In fact, identity politics is not a threat but part of democracy in Indonesia, especially in every election of regional heads and deputy regional heads at both the mayor and governor levels.

In Indonesia, religious self-identification moderates economic voting, challenging the notion that religion is a weak predictor in new Muslim-majority democracies (Budi, 2024). In the United States, religious identity's impact on presidential voting has increased since 1980, particularly among upper-class whites (Hirschl et al., 2012). Western European studies reveal that religious individuals tend to have less liberal economic preferences, leading them to vote against redistributive parties, even when they might benefit from redistribution (Stegmueller, 2013). This phenomenon is attributed to political parties strategically bundling conservative moral policies with anti-redistribution positions. Multiple U.S. presidential elections have shown evidence of both religious identity and sociodemographic effects on voter choice (Hirschl et al., 2009).

On the basis of the results of this study, the strong relationship between religious similarities and people's choices and the theory of identity politics, which states that national identity cannot be separated from the characteristics of a nation, the researcher argues that identity politics cannot be separated in democracies. Democracy that is imposed without seeing the identity of figures or candidates for regional/deputy regional heads who compete in a regional head election is wrong (Liddle, 2000). For this reason, it is the responsibility of political parties to carry out cadre formation and recruit potential leaders who compete in regional head elections in Indonesia. The similarity of identity (religion, ethnicity, or regional origin) is an important factor for political parties in nominating regional head candidates.

In deeply divided societies like Israel, social affiliations based on race, ethnicity, and religion often trump socioeconomic factors in determining voting patterns (Zeedan, 2024). Similarly, in Pakistan, sub-ethnic or tribal identities significantly influence voting choices (Ahmad, 2023). The causal centrality of political identity within an individual's self-concept can predict the likelihood of voting along party lines, as observed in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election and the Brexit referendum (Chen & Urminsky, 2019). However, the impact of political identity on voting behavior is not uniform. In the U.S. Senate, interactions between senators with shared political identities lead to convergence in voting behavior, while interactions between those with opposing identities result in divergence, especially in more divided committees (Liu & Srivastava, 2015). These findings underscore the importance of identity in shaping political behavior across various contexts.

This study also measured the variable of money politics. The results revealed that the voting public did not want to accept money politics if the candidates carried by political parties did not have the same religion as the voters did. This is good news for reducing the practice of money politics in regional head elections because the practice of money politics often occurs in every regional head election, but it is necessary to conduct an in-depth study of money politics variables in the future for future researchers.

The researcher's contribution to local political research has been as follows: (Arifin & Ritonga, 2020) with title *The Influence Of Political Identity Toward Tolerance Peoples In Pematangsiantar City During The Governors Sumatera Utara Election In 2018*. The results show that the correlation between the political identity variable and the tolerance of people in Pematangsiantar city in the 2018 Sumatra Utara governor election is (-0.120), which is very weak, negative, and significant and has a two-way significance value or sig (2-tailed) of 0.017 because the number of significance values is  $0.017 < 0.05$ . This illustrates that political identity has a weak influence on the tolerance of the Pematangsiantar city community in social life; if political identity is high, then the social tolerance of the community will be low (intolerance still occurs in differences in choice owing to the politics of identity/ethnicity, religion, and regional origin); however, if identity politics is low in the 2018 Sumatra Utara governor election, then social tolerance will be high. In conclusion, the people of Pematangsiantar city, which is known as the "Tolerant City", cannot be separated from the influence of political identity in the 2018 Sumatra Utara Governor Election.

From various local political studies that have been conducted in several regions in North Sumatra, researchers realize that identity politics cannot be separated in every contestation of regional head elections for regents/mayors/governors. The assumption thus far that local politics as a threat to democracy can no longer be used in local politics because one of the researcher's hypotheses is that identity politics can increase voter participation; by considering the political identity of the candidate pair and the geographical identity (ethnicity, religion, customs, culture) of the voting community, political parties as proponents of regional head candidates should have party cadres who have the same ethnicity, religion, customs, and culture as the geographical voting community coupled with the popularity, performance or track record of prospective candidates from these cadres to be carried by political parties.

The hypothesis of identity politics, which has been considered a threat to democracy, is not in line with current local politics, especially in North Sumatra. The study of local politics by prioritizing the issue of identity politics is always considered to harm the value of democracy. The reality is inversely proportional in that the voting public prioritizes the similarity of religion, ethnicity, and regional origin of the candidate pairs carried by political parties. This phenomenon is also beneficial for democracy, namely, the increase in voter political participation, which is an important indicator of the running of democracy in the realm of local politics. The advantage that can be obtained from this phenomenon is the increased political participation of the community using their voting rights to the polls; thus, it becomes important for political parties to prepare quality cadres by taking into account the similarity of religion, ethnicity, and the origin of the region to fight in the Regional Head Elections of Regents/mayors/governors in the realm of local politics. For individuals, because a sense of ambition to become regional heads can be suppressed if they do not have similarities in religion, ethnicity, or regional origin with the geographical community of voters, self-awareness of individuals, both cadres and noncadres of political parties, can minimize the desire for power.

## 6. Conclusion

On the basis of the results of the research and discussion, this study concludes that religious political identity influences public choice in the Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020, with a value of 0.546. Strong influence. Tribal political identity influences the choice of society. In 2020, Sibolga Mayoral Election was 0.27/sufficient power. The impact of religious political identity is greater than the influence of tribal identity, which determines people's choice of Sibolga city in Sibolga Mayoral Election in 2020.

The novelty of this research is that identity politics does not merely damage the democratic order that has been built in Indonesia. We must accept different identities in pluralism, especially in regional head elections. Community identity becomes very important for political parties that propose candidates for regional heads and deputy regional heads in regional head elections as a power strategy, political marketing.

This research is limited to Sibolga city, which has ethnic diversity; ethnographically, the local population is no longer dominant in a community order, so further research needs to be conducted on identity politics in other regional head elections by eliminating the variable of money politics.

The implications of this research provide input for political parties as supporters of regent/mayor/governor candidates by preparing political party cadres who have similarities in religion, ethnicity, and regional origin with the geographical similarities of the voting community, for individuals or nonpolitical cadres to have self-awareness and consider the geography of the voting community rather than the desire to be in power to become regional heads of regents/mayors/governors who geographically do not have religion, ethnicity, or regional origin in common with themselves. Further research should examine the comparison between money politics and identity politics in community political participation in North Sumatra.

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### Ethical considerations

All data collected, including responses to surveys and any identifiable information, are anonymized and securely stored.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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