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Nomor : 064/SP.HCP/LPPM/UNIJA/II/2022

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# The Strategies of Religious Leaders to Become Regional Heads in Indonesia

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**Submission date:** 22-Feb-2022 01:58PM (UTC+0700)

**Submission ID:** 1768184398

**File name:** 0715017702-4323-Artikel-Plagiasi-21-02-2022.pdf (369.67K)

**Word count:** 6428

**Character count:** 34655

# **The Strategies of Religious Leaders to Become Regional Heads in Indonesia**

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**Abstract.** Religious leaders who took part in political contestation are trapped in conditions of religious politicization and identity politics. But it also became a capital in gaining political support from their group. This study was conducted to analyze the strategies carried out by religious leaders to become candidates for regional heads which were then analyzed using motivation theory and rational choice theory. This study uses descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews of various informants who directly interacted with religious leaders who ran for regional head. The data were collected by direct observation during the regional head election and when religious leaders are being regional heads. This study found that there are several strategies carried out by religious leaders to become regional heads in Indonesia such as by gaining support from businessmen who have money, joining the ruling party, switching to other party, making a coalition with party cadres that won the general election. Also, there are some who have a strategy of closing the opportunity of their rivals to compete in the election and became a single candidate or became a senior cadre in political parties.

**Keywords:** Religious Leaders; Regional Heads; Politicization of Religion; Identity Politics

## **1 Introduction**

As a result of the 1998 reform, the presence of religious political parties was inevitable. This can be seen from the emergence of several religious political parties that took part in the first general election after the reform held in 1999. Those parties were the "Prosperous Justice Party" (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS), the "Crescent Star Party" (Partai Bulan Bintang, PBB) and the "Islamic Community Party" (Partai Ummat Islam, PUI) and other two religious organizations-based parties i.e. the "National Awakening Party" (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, PKB) and the "National Mandate Party" (Partai Amanat Nasional, PAN) (Filsafat et al., 2012). Directly or indirectly, the emergence of those religious parties in Indonesia gave rise to two conditions between populism and identity politics as well. On the one hand, it became a unifying means or symbol of those who embrace religion and have political attention. But on the other hand, it has created polarization which is prone to abuse religious symbols (Suseno, 2018).

The politicization of religion usually occurs in the form of the use of norms, doctrines, teachings, principles, texts, symbols, jargon and others related to religion to gain practical power (Al Qurtuby, 2018). The politicization of religion means the instrumentalization of religion to get practical political interests. Religion should have a strategic function towards the existing political reality (Kurniawan, 2018). In the regional head elections, the politicization of religion is also still being carried out by those who are involved in politics, repetisi (Fuad, 2014).

The disbursement of political flow and identity politics in Indonesia, religious political parties in Indonesia face another problem, in the form of political pragmatism. Islamic parties **11** built pragmatic coalitions in various regions to win regional elections as conducted by PKS, the "United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP) and PBB as well as other parties that have a voter basis or have links with Islamic mass organizations such as PAN and PKB. At least from the available data, from the 101 regions that held the 2017 regional elections, as many as 22 pairs of non-Muslim regional head candidates were promoted by Islamic parties, both alone and in coalitions with other parties. Those parties were PKS, PPP and PBB. If combined with parties that have a voter basis or have links with Islamic mass organizations such as PAN or PKB, there would be many more (Lukman, kbr.id, Saturday, 18 February 2017). The president of PKS, Muhammad Sohiful Iman, stated that his party is not lazy in supporting candidates who are non-Muslim. "It is very possible, right? PKS has been from the beginning promoting, you see in Papua the most obvious example, Mr. Lukas Enembe to be the regent and governor and he has supported the PKS for two periods. There is no problem," Sohiful said (Hutabarat, 2019).

**Table 1.** Non-Muslim Regional Head Candidate Pairs Promoted by the Islamic Parties in the 2017 Regional Elections

No	Names of Regional <b>12</b> lead Candidates	Bearer Parties	Regions	Information
1	Hj. Yasti Soepredjo Mokoagow and Yanny Ronny Tuuk	PKS, PDIP PAN, PKB Nasdem	Bolaang Mongondow Regency, North Sulawesi.	Muslim-Christian
2	Jefirston Riwu Kore and Hermanus Man	PAN, PPP, Demokrat, Gerindra	Kupang Mayor, East Nusa Tenggara	Christian-Catholic
3	Petrus Fatlolon and Agustinus Utuwaly	PKS, PKB, PKPI Nasdem, Demokrat, Gerindra, Hanura	Maluku Tenggara Barat Regency, Maluku	Catholic
4	Richard Louhenapessy and Syarif Hadler	PPP, Golkar, Nasdem	Ambon Mayor, Maluku	Christian-Muslim
5	H. Irianto Malingong and Hesmon Firatoni VL Pandili	PPP, Golkar, PAN, Nasdem	Banggai Kepulauan Regency, Central Sulawesi	Muslim-Protestan
6	Herman Yosef Loli Wutun and Yohanes Viany Burin	PKS Gerindra	Lembata Regency, East Nusa Tenggara	Non-Muslim
7	Yoseph Lagadoni Herin and Marius Payong Paty	PPP Golkar	Flores Timur Regency, East Nusa Tenggara	Catholic
8	Samson Richargo Atapary and Mohamad Suhfi Majid	PKS PDIP	Seram Bagian Barat Regency, Maluku	Protestan-Muslim
9	Ali Sangaji and	PKS	Pulau Morotai	Muslim -

No	Names of Regional Head Candidates	Bearer Parties	Regions	Information
	Pdt Yulce Makasarat	PPP, PAN	Regency, North Maluku	Non-Muslim
10	Stefanus Kaisma and Mustafa Salam	PKS Golkar	Mappi Regency, Papua	Muslim- Non-Muslim
11	Befa Yigibalom and Yemis Kogoya	PKS, PPP, PDIP, PKPI, Nasdem, Hanura, Demokrat	Lanny Jaya Regency, Papua	Non-Muslim
12	Benyamin Arisoy and Nathan Bonay	PPP PBB	Yapen regency, Papua	Non-Muslim
13	Yairus Gwijangge and Wentius Nimiangge	PKS, PAN Golkar, PKPI Demokrat	Nduga Regency, Papua	Non-Muslim
14	Albertus Suripno and Adrian Roi Senis	PBB, PDIP Hanura	Sarmi Regency, Papua	Non-Muslim
15	Amos Yikwa and Robeka Enembe	PKS PAN	Tolikara Regency, Papua	Non-Muslim
16	Yuni Wonda and Deinas Geley	PKS, PDIP, Golkar, PAN Nasdem, Hanura, Gerindra	Puncak Jaya Regency, Papua	Non-Muslim
17	Jansen Monim and Abdul Rahman Sulaiman	PKS Golkar PDIP	Jayapura Regency, Papua	Protestan- Muslim
18	Bartolomius Mirip and Deny Miagoni	PKS, PKPI Golkar	Intan Jaya Regency, Papua	Non-Muslim
19	Anthon Iyowauw and Yanuaris Tigi	PKS	Dogiyai Regency, Papua	Non-Muslim
20	Irene Manibuy and Abdullah Manaray	PKS, PPP, PKB, Hanura	West Papua	Muslim- Non-Muslim
21	Bernard Sagrim and Paskalis Kocu	PKS, PDIP, Golkar, Nasdem	Maybrat Regency, West Papua	Non-Muslim
22	Gabriel Asem and Mesak Metusala Yekwam	PKS, PDIP, PKB, Nasdem, Golkar, Demokrat, Gerindra, Hanura	Tambrauw Regency, West Papua	Non-Muslim

Source: <https://pilkada2017.kpu.go.id/hasil/>

In the context of local politics, in the regional head elections, many religious leaders who nominated themselves to be the candidate of regional heads presented the political mobilization of religious culture symbols in the use of campaign jargons, exploitation of the charisma of kiai (an honorific title for Muslim clergy), big name of religious organizations, popularity of pesantren (Islamic boarding school) or other religious educational institutions (Haris, 2015). The existence of religious leaders who gained social and political legitimacy made them easier to occupy certain political positions in the area, both as executive and legislative officials (Hannan et al., 2018).

As time goes on, voters in Indonesia are increasingly independent in determining political choices (Yunas, 2016). The existence of social media has become the source of voters' preferences to be less influenced by the jargon, charisma and political charm of certain figures (Ediraras et al., 2013). Besides, the pragmatic behavior that occurs evenly among voters in Indonesia becomes an important issue for the development of direct democracy in Indonesia (Allen, 2015), (Fossati et al., 2020).

This condition raises problems among religious leaders who want to become candidates for regional heads. They can no longer rely on their closeness to the ummah and capitalize their religious forums or become advisors for recitation (Lokal, 2010). They must have large capital to win the contestation, including having a vast social and political networks, as well as adequate political support to become regional heads. This research was conducted to answer the question of how the strategy of religious leaders to become regional heads in Indonesia.

## 2 Method

This study uses the descriptive qualitative method. The results of the study show a number of strategies and efforts taken by religious leaders who were contestating for regional head elections in Indonesia. This study involved some of regional heads coming from various regions in Madura, Java, Sumatera, Kalimantan, and Nusa Tenggara. The data in this study were collected from in-depth interview techniques and direct observation to various related sources. In-depth interviews were carried out with people close to the regional heads, the winning team, and political consultants during the regional head election. Observations were made when the religious leaders were involved in the regional head election contestation. Also, any information related to the strategies and efforts taken by them were collected from online sources as well as the data and material related to the theory used to review the findings of this study, and those that are related to the strategies of religious leaders to become candidates for regional heads.



The researcher with KH. A. Busyro Karim. Leader of Pondok Pesantren Alkarimiyah Sumenep Regent for 2010-2020 period



KH A. Busyro with a businessman, H.M. Sahnan, and the candidate of Sumenep Vice Regent for 2015-2020 period, Fauzi.

## 3 Result and Discussion

Religious leaders who participated in political contestation, in this case, the regional head election made various efforts or strategies to become a regional head candidate in Indonesia. Their efforts and strategies are diverse, not just being a cadre of political parties. In fact, not all political parties have the ability, both financially and electorally, to hoist their cadres to

become candidates for regional heads (Irham, 2016). Political parties still have many problems that have not been solved yet. Political parties are supposed to be a place for preparing generation to be national leaders, both at the central and regional levels (Hanafi, 2016) so that ideally the candidates for national leaders at the central level in various branches including executive, legislative, and court, as well as at the regional level, come from political parties (Rekrutmen et al., n.d.). But in fact, political parties merely seem to be event organizer (Gustiana Kambo, 2016), (Solikhin, 2017). Political parties also often play the role as vehicles used by regional head candidate to take part in political contestation in the regions (Razaqtiar, 2016). The others even just make political parties as a patron from any criminal acts such as corruption that have trapped regional head candidates (Permana, Aditya, 2018). So, the religious leaders who took part in regional head election contestation usually take various efforts and strategies as following.

### **3.1 Coalition with Entrepreneurs**

Religious leaders who nominate themselves as regional heads usually have social capital in the form of networks with prospective voters. This capital is obtained from religious activities such as preaching, giving religious instruction, religious speech, istigosah (praying together in public), and various religious agendas that involve them with the masses. All of these, of course, would be their main asset in terms of gaining popularity which in turn more or less give impact on their electability. Once, for instance, there was an issue to carry Ustadz Abdussomad to become a Vice-Presidential candidate in the 2019 Presidential Election. One of the reasons is because he is considered to have great potential, famous suddenly, and has a lot of fans, especially through social media (Herdiana, 2013).

Yet, the social capital owned by religious leaders who plunged into local politics such as regional head elections is not supported by adequate financial capacity. The ability of religious leaders to influence their ummah (Muslim community) to accept their religious teachings is not in line with the acceptance of the ummah to support their political agenda. This is one of the factors why many religious leaders failed when running for political contestation. Likewise, religious leaders are unable to get financial support from their ummah. Such a condition would not happen when they invite the people to give charity and donate their money for religious social activities.

The religious leaders then make strategies to build coalitions with other parties. One of which is with entrepreneurs or other parties that have huge financial capital. The huge number of operational costs to win a regional head candidate make religious leaders unable to finance independently. They need funds from other parties, people who have money or entrepreneurs (Nopyandri, 2011).

Such a case happened in Sumenep, East Java. KH. A. Busyro Karim, the caretaker of the Pesantren Alkarimiyah Gapura, Sumenep Regency, East Java, gained support from a politician and businessman Said Abdullah to run in the regional head election for the period of 2010-2015. In this cooperation, Said Abdullah then paired KH. Busyro Karim with Soengkono Sidik, a bureaucrat supported by Said Abdullah. All costs for winning agenda were borne by Said Abdullah which was estimated to have spent Rp 12 billion. The pairs won the election and led the Sumenep Regency government. From this first successful coalition with Said Abdullah, KH. Busyro Karim again continued his coalition for the second period of 2015-2020 in which he paired with Achmad Fauzi. Gaining support from Said Abdullah, the pair won the election and appointed to be the Regent and Vice Regent of Sumenep for the 2015-2020 period. Except Said, other entrepreneurs who joined in a

coalition with KH. Busyro Karim was H.M. Sahnan, a coal and property entrepreneur who lives in Surabaya, East Java.

*"Our capital is less indeed and eventually we make coalition. There was an offer at that time. I know exactly that the first meeting occurs because of the lobby of the individual which then bring Kiai Busyro to see Mr. Said. At that time Mr. Said still serves as Treasurer of the East Java PDIP (the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle). The meeting is held in Jakarta. At the meeting, an agreement is made to give support to kiai Busyro and Mr. Said stated "I am ready to support the funds,". This support is actually winning agenda apart from the support given by the party. The PKB as the bearer of Kiai Busyro actually could run alone as they have 11 seats in the Regional House of Representative. But due to financial problem, they inevitably choose to make coalition until now (Interview with Zahrir Ridha, the Busyro-Soenggono winning team, at his house, Monday, April 1, 2019).*

Similar case took place in Salatiga City, Central Java. In contrast to KH. Buysro Karim who collaborated with entrepreneurs as a political investor, Ustad Muhammad Haris created a coalition with a businessman, Yulianto, to pair up directly to become a candidate in the Mayor election of Salatiga, Central Java. Yulianto was the treasurer of GAPENSI (the powerful Indonesian builders Association) branch Salatiga for the 1998-2002 period. He also became the Chair of the HIPMI (the Indonesia Young Entrepreneurs Association) branch Salatiga for the period of 2006-2010. Since 1994, he became the director of PT. Putra Perwira Tama Salatiga. Yulianto-Haris was unstoppable and won the election of the mayor for two periods, 2011-2016 and 2017-2022 although their opponents were from PDI-P who were also supported by religious figures.

According to Wima Edy Nugroho, the political consultant of this pair, the victory of Yulianto-Haris in the election was a result of the combination of Yulianto's economic power and party cadre militancy that supported Haris. *"An extraordinary collaboration if I may say, for raising support from potential voters, their team is militant."* (Wima interview, Monday, March 16, 2020 in Surabaya)

### 3.2 Party Switching

Another strategy undertaken by religious leaders to become regional head candidates is moving to another party especially the winning party which of its general chairman or board member becomes a president. As what happened to KH. Muhammad Zainul Majdi (Tuan Guru Bajang), Governor of West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) who switched to the Democratic Party. Tuan Guru Bajang is a member of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI) from PBB for the period of 2004-2009. In the 2008-2013 regional head election, he ran for NTB Governor in pair with H. Badrul Munir promoted by PBB and PKS and won the election. Having been the Governor of NTB, Tuan Guru Bajang then joined the Partai Demokrat led by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) who was the president at that time. Tuan Guru was then appointed as the Chairman of the Regional Leadership Council of the Democratic Party NTB. In the 2013-2018 regional head election, the alumni of Al-Azhar University Cairo again ran for NTB Governor candidacy in partnership with Muhammad Amin. Tuan Guru Bajang was promoted by the Democratic Party, and received support from the Gerindra, Golkar, PDIP, PPP, PAN and PKB.

While in Sumenep, East Java, the religious figures/ kiai who switched to another party to be able to run for regional head candidate was KH. Ramdan Siraj. He was a cadre of the PKB Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB) who was elected to become the Regent of Sumenep through election process in the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) during the period



of 2000-2005. In the direct regional head election for the period of 2005-2010, PKB brought the pair of KH. Ramdan Siraj-Moh. Ramli. But officially it is not possible to carry two candidates from the same party in the General Elections Commission (KPU). Therefore, KH. Ramdan Siraj switched to PPP to run for regional head election in partnership with Moch. Dahlan. This pair won the election by defeating the candidates carried by PKB.

### **3.3 Coalition with the Winning Party**

The strategy of making a coalition with the winning party was carried out by religious leader Ahmad Heryawan. Ahmad Heryawan is a religious figure, the alumnus of the Islamic and Arabic Sciences Institute (LIPIA) who was later being active in da'wah (preaching) activity and became a member of the Regional House of Representative (DPRD) DKI Jakarta from PKS for the period of 1999-2009. In 2008, he ran for Governor candidacy of West Java in partnership with Dede Jusuf who was a cadre of the Democratic Party led by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono who was at that time the President of the Republic of Indonesia. He was again renominated as Governor of West Java for the second period in partnership with Dedi Mizwar who was promoted by PKS and Demokrat. Both led West Java until the 2013-2018 period.

### **3.4 Become a Single Candidate**

Being the sole candidate in the regional head election took place in Pasuruan Regency, East Java. H.M. Irsyad Yusuf or familiarly called Gus Irsyad was born and raised from a family of religious leaders as well as the younger brother of Saifullah Yusuf (Gus Ipul) who was the former Vice Governor of East Java. Gus Irsyad was active at IPNU (Students Association of Nahdlatul Ulama) Pasuruan and then became the commander of Banser (Multipurpose Ansor Front) of the Pasuruan Regency and the Vice Chairperson of GP (Youth Movement) Ansor. In the 2004 elections, he was a member of the Regional House of Representative (DPRD) Pasuruan from PKB. In the period of 2010-2014, he became the Chairman of the DPRD. Gus Irsyad then ran for the Regent candidacy of Pasuruan for the period of 2013-2018. Carried by PKB and the Democratic Party, the pair of Irsyad Yusuf-Riang Kulup Prayudha (Satria) won the election. Gus Irsyad then ran for the second period of 2018-2023 and paired with A. Mujib Imron (Gus Mujib) as the sole candidate, without rivals, because they were supported by all parties in Pasuruan Regency. There were no independent candidates.

### **3.5 Become a Party Cadre**

One of religious figures who was a party cadre and then elected as the regional head was Ustadz Irwan Prayitno. Irwan is the founder and chairman of the Padang Cendekia Islamic Education Foundation (1988-1995). He also established the Al-Madani Education and Da'wah Foundation Padang in 1990. This doctoral graduate of Putra University Malaysia also became a member of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) Indonesia in 1992-1995, and a member of the "Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council" (Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia, DDII) Padang, in 1992-1995. After the Reformation Era in 1998, he became the Chairman of the Justice Party which then turned into PKS. In West Sumatra, Irwan later became a party cadre who was considered a senior, both in terms of his academic achievement and party level. Irwan was born and completed his elementary school in

Yogyakarta. After graduating from elementary school, he moved to Padang, West Sumatra with his parents. In Padang, he completed his secondary education. After that, he moved to Jakarta to pursue his undergraduate degree at the University of Indonesia (UI). In During 2004-2009, Irwan was a member of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI). He was re-elected for the 2009-2014 period but only one year at the office as he was nominated by his party to run for Governor candidacy of West Sumatra for the 2010-2015 period. He paired with Muslim Kasim and won the election. Both was re-elected for the second period of 2016-2021.

**Table 2.** Religious Leaders Who Become Regional Heads in Indonesia

No	Name	Region	Period	Strategy
1	KH. A. Busyro Karim	Sumenep Regent, East Java	2010-2020	Coalition with entrepreneurs
2	Ustad Abdul Haris	Vice Mayor Salatiga, Central Java	2011-2022	Coalition with entrepreneurs
3	KH. Zainul Majdi (Tuan Guru Bajang)	Governor of Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB)	2008-2018	Party Switching
4	KH. Ramdan Siraj	Sumenep Regent, East Java	1999-2010	Party Switching
5	Ustad Ahmad Heryawan, LC	Governor of West Java	2008-2018	Coalition with the winning party
6	Gus Irsyad	Pasuruan Regent, East Java	2013-2023	Become a single candidate
7	Ustad Irwan Prayitno	Governor of West Sumatra	2010-2021	Become a party cadre

Source: Gained from various sources, 2020

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The strategies of religious leaders to become regional heads in Indonesia can be analyzed using motivation theory. In the motivation theory, as elaborated by David Mc Clelland it is said that humans in taking action are driven by motivation. The motivation that drives individuals to achieve, to power, and to affiliate. Achievement motivation enables people to take responsibility for the situation and strive to find solutions for the problems. Besides, people with achievement motivation will dare to face the risks resulting from the responsibilities that have been taken. Of course, there would be a concrete feedback from what has already been carried out. (G. Nicholls et al., 1989).

Being the head of a region bears a great responsibility to implement development programs and serves the interests of the community. Not all challenges are easy to be managed by religious leaders who become regional heads. From the viewpoint of norms and moral responsibility, the words, attitudes, and actions of the religious leaders are always considered by many people. But after they become regional heads, not only their words or actions, but also the policies they make as public officials. In fact, the religious leaders who become regional heads often fail in carrying out self-transformation from merely religious leaders to public officials. The position as religious figures is always admired, valued, praised, and served. But after they become public officials, the situation changed. He must serve the needs of the people, including visiting and absorbing the aspirations of those who were always coming to them before.

Mc Clelland, as cited by Pamela Braden, said that humans were trying to succeed in getting what they have set. But, individuals who have the motivation to achieve need to do work and challenging things. Thus, there will be efforts to overcome difficult situations and problems. People who are motivated to achieve will work effectively both by working alone

or working together and associating with high achievers. Individuals who are not highly motivated or have low motivation for achievement are more complacent and do not dare to design success, due to lack of confidence and dislike of challenges. (Horner & Baack, n.d.). Mc Clelland's achievement motivation theory states that people are interested in things that will motivate them to move forward. , On the contrary, people who have low achievement motivation tend to pay more attention to matters related to the surrounding environment (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988).

Changing attitudes and mentality from being served to serving is the toughest challenge for religious leaders when become political leaders. As long as being religious leaders, they are living in a homogeneous society. While as regional heads, they must enter into heterogeneous and even plural society. This is the fact that must be faced. The position of religious leaders usually just deals with with positive and fine activities but as the heads of the region, they must interact with all groups in the area, both good and bad ones.

Besides, there is a need for power, to influence others, to control others, and to make others behave as they desire. The other need is affiliation, a desire to maintain relationships with others and work in a friendly and close way. In Mc Clelland's view, motivation will encourage people to do something. When their motivation is very strong, it will have an impact on efforts to rationalize it. It will continue to repeat for the same situation. Then the way to realize will be the same, repeatedly, with high frequency (Harrell & Stahl, 1984).

These challenges would examine the religious leaders as regional heads whether they are able to face and overcome them or not. If they are successful, it would be their capital as politicians and their influence and power are automatically becoming greater. So far, their influence is limited to those who become their community. Now, they are able to influence and dominate people outside of it. At the same time, it would be their social and political capital to regain power at the same level or higher.

Things that need to be considered in motivation theory are, if the reward is a factor that comes from outside (*extrinsic*), then the term of satisfaction will last shortly. The motivation which is achieved from things that are positive and complex would last longer (Pardee, 1990). Achievement motivation as stated by Mc Clelland is also in agreement with that of (Tsekos et al., 2013) who states that a person's activities to achieve goals and maintain or develop what has already been achieved is part of achievement motivation. Also, (J. G. Nicholls, 1984) states that the achievement motivation is the motivation aimed at developing or demonstrating high abilities (Duda & Nicholls, 1992). People would have a high motivation while having high achievements as well. The achievement motivation is the motivation that aims to pursue achievement (Purwanto, 2014).

Becoming a regional head is a special achievement for religious leaders who have plunged into practical politics. It is considered as an achievement because it is the top position of the leader of that area. Being a member of legislative body is also another achievement too but this position is not the only one. Many people occupy the same position. Likewise, in terms of the authority to control power, both in the form of policies and regional budgets and finances arrangement, the regional head has a central and dominant role. Work results and performance as the regional head are also in parallel with his achievements in public.

Motivation to gain power and achievement and the affiliation of religious leaders who become regional heads can be analyzed with the perspective of rational choice theory. The rational choice theory refers to James Coleman's opinion. Coleman uses rational choice theory at the micro-scale that is individual behavior referring to an individual's subjective beliefs and preferences (*political actors*). To be considered rational, the actor is expected to

gather information to prove his belief (Coleman, 1986). Yet, endless continuous information gathering is also a sign of irrationality, especially when the situation has a certain urgency. Anthony Downs gives an explanation of rational choices on political issues. Politicians and voters act rationally. The motivations underlying politicians act are related to personal desires such as income, prestige, and power. These goals cannot be obtained unless raised so they aim to maximize their political support and policies made are only a means to obtain or achieve these goals. Hence, the theory of rationality assumes that humans always want to get something and want to succeed with the desire to get results immediately (Peter Beilharz, 1991).

The regional head is the ruler at the local level. His power is quite large including the power to manage the financial budget, to make policies, to control the government apparatus. Even the regional head is the highest position of three political authorities in the region i.e. the executive, legislative, and judicial, through the "Regional Leadership Communication Forum" (Forum Komunikasi Pimpinan Daerah, Forkopimda). The regional head has vast authority starting from the central regional government till the village level and including all sectors ranging from education, health, to social. After the era of regional autonomy, his authority is broader except foreign affairs, defense, fiscal, and religious affairs. The regional head has a great opportunity to accumulate wealth, as individuals, capital, families, and groups. In historical records, there has not been a regional head whose wealth is decreasing after in charge in the office.

Rational choice theory focuses more on actor. The actor is seen as human beings who have a purpose. This means that the actor always has a goal, and his actions are aimed at achieving that goal. The actor is also considered to have choices (or values, needs). Rational choice theory ignores what the choice or what the source of the actor's choice is. What is important is the fact that his actions are taken to achieve goals that are appropriate to the level of the actor's choice. So, the actor will do things that will take them to his goals and desires. The actor is the individual who always has a goal in everything that he is undergoing. The power of the actor depends on the resources that he has so that once he is able to control and has certain interests, he would also be able to control the resource (Pakulski, 2009).

In the view of rational choice theory, religious leaders who become regional heads are part of the reflection to fulfill their self-interests. And when in charging at the office, their self-interest will be manifested in various forms of interests, most of which benefit themselves and their groups. It is not surprising that in many cases, regional heads are suspected of corruption cases, due to violation and illegal actions.

Rational choice theory is the only theory that might result in the integration of various sociological paradigms. Coleman is confident that his approach operates on the basis of the methodology of individualism and can use rational choice theory as a micro-level foundation to explain macro-level phenomena. The basic idea of the Coleman's rational choice theory is that people act intentionally towards a goal. That goal is then resulted in values or choices (Publications, 2017).

It becomes relevant that religious leaders who are involved in regional elections seek to realize their goals and interests, with a variety of strategies, methods and efforts. This is of course driven by the motivation to power and the power gained is used to create their achievements. One of achievements that is easily measured in the era of materialism is in terms of wealth and property. This is obtained from the power they have to control various policies, budgets, and resources in the regions.

According to Arjawa, based on James Coleman's explanation, the sources that play a role in rational choice theory are actor and resources. Actor and resources are two interrelated

things. In this case, the actor always has a role in running and controlling resources against those who are looking for resources. Thus, it can be said that controlling over resources depends on the ability of the actor and his considerations that are most favorable to him. The stronger the actor, the stronger he could control the resources. The actors in this case can be in the form of groups or individuals (Sosiologi et al., n.d.).

#### 4 Conclusion

Religious leaders who plunge into local politics contestation, especially regional head candidacy, have various strategies to be able to gain power to become regional heads. Some made coalitions with businessmen, switch to other parties or joined the ruling party. The others took all the election tickets as a single candidate and some became loyal and consistent party cadres. All of these are driven by motivation to power and gain achievement for themselves and their families and groups. Henceforth, the power acquired is used to fulfill self-interest, in the form of attaining the welfare for himself, family and group. What is done by individuals, including religious leaders, is part of an effort to maximize self-interest. If there is more than that, it is part of an effort to preserve the power that has been achieved. The rewards obtained will encourage the repeat of the actions that have been taken, to be realized again and regain the rewards obtained.

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