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WINNING STRATEGIES BY FEMALE LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATES IN THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN CIAMIS REGENCY

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Abstract

This study analyzes the winning strategies of female legislative candidates in the 2024 election in Ciamis Regency using a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with six informants, including legislative candidates, party cadres, and political observers. The results show that the winning strategies integrate three main capitals according to Ronald S. Burt's (1995) theory: financial, human, and social capital. Despite facing limited funds, female candidates are able to optimize resources through efficient fund management, increased leadership capacity, and strengthened community-based social networks. This pattern of integrating these three capitals effectively overcomes structural barriers such as patriarchal culture and limited political access. This study confirms the relevance of Burt's three capitals theory in the context of local Indonesian politics, adapting to digital dynamics. Its practical implications emphasize the importance of holistic women's political cadre development and alternative funding policies based on crowdfunding.

Keywords: Winning strategies; Female legislative candidates and general elections.

A.   INTRODUCTION

General elections are one of the main pillars of democracy in Indonesia, serving as a means of realizing popular sovereignty. Through elections, the public directly participates in determining the direction of policy and governance. However, the success of democracy is measured not only by a free and fair electoral process, but also by its level of inclusivity, particularly the involvement of women in political institutions.

Women's representation is a crucial indicator of gender-equitable political development. Women's active participation in parliament can result in policies that are more responsive to the interests of the wider community. In Indonesia, the government has implemented affirmative action policies through a minimum quota of 30% female legislative candidates, as stipulated in Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections and Law Number 2 of 2008 concerning Political Parties. However, the implementation of these policies still faces various obstacles, such as weak party commitment, gender stereotypes, limited financial resources, and the lack of strong political network support.

A similar situation also occurs in Ciamis Regency. According to data from the Ciamis General Elections Commission (KPU), 228 female legislative candidates ran in the 2019 and 2024 elections, but only five were elected in both terms. This data indicates stagnant female representation in regional parliaments. This is influenced by a persistent patriarchal culture that views politics as a male domain, limited financial capital, and a lack of social networks and public support for female candidates.

This phenomenon demands a more adaptive and contextual winning strategy for female legislative candidates. This strategy includes optimizing three forms of capital, as proposed by

Ronald S. Burt (1995): financial capital, human capital, and social capital. These three forms of capital must be effectively integrated to enable female candidates to compete amidst existing structural and cultural challenges.

This research focuses on analyzing the winning strategies of female legislative candidates in the 2024 elections in Ciamis Regency. The goal is to identify the strategies used, the supporting and inhibiting factors, and to formulate practical recommendations to increase women's chances of winning in political contests. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of government science, particularly studies of gender politics and local democracy, and serve as a reference for political parties and policy makers in strengthening women's representation in legislative institutions.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Research

Several relevant studies have examined the winning strategies of female legislative candidates in the Indonesian political context. Wati and Hidayati (2014) found that interpersonal communication, such as face-to-face meetings and direct dialogue, was more effective than mass media in building voter trust, particularly in regions with a strong patriarchal culture. Setiawan and Kurniawati (2015) highlighted the role of social media in expanding women's political participation. Digital media such as Facebook and Instagram helped overcome limited campaign costs and expanded communication reach, especially to young voters.

Prasetyo and Rahayu (2017) emphasized the importance of social and religious approaches for female legislative candidates in West Java. Active involvement in communities and social activities is key to countering the dominance of patriarchal culture.

Fadhilah and Azizah (2022) assessed that the gender affirmative action policy, which included a 30% quota for female legislative candidates, did increase the number of candidates, but did not significantly impact electability due to weak structural and financial support. Meanwhile, Suryani and Kamil (2023) demonstrated that personal approaches such as direct visits to voters' homes and social activities were more effective in strengthening public trust in female legislative candidates than media-based campaign strategies.

These studies confirm that women's winning strategies in elections depend not only on campaigns but also on the ability to build personal communication, social networks, and adapt to cultural contexts. This research expands on previous studies by placing the analysis in the local context of Ciamis Regency and linking it to Ronald S. Burt's (1995) social capital theory.

Political Winning Strategy

A political winning strategy is a systematic effort undertaken by candidates to gain voter support through resource management, political communication, and self-image (Marschall & Stoker, 2002). Wardani (2018) emphasized that kinship networks and social support are crucial factors in determining political victory, especially for women facing structural barriers.

According to Schroder (2009), political strategy encompasses steps to attain and maintain power through effective and targeted campaigns.

Ronald S. Burt (1995) argued that a candidate's success depends on the management of three forms of capital: financial capital, human capital, and social capital. Financial capital relates to the economic resources used in the campaign; human capital encompasses the candidate's intelligence, charisma, and political experience; while social capital refers to the network of relationships that strengthen public support and legitimacy. The integration of these three forms of capital forms the primary basis for analyzing the winning strategies of female legislative candidates in Ciamis Regency.

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Political Representation

Pitkin (1967) defined political representation as the relationship between representatives and those represented in the political decision-making process. In a gender context, women's political representation reflects the extent to which women can advocate for their group's interests and needs in parliament. Miller and Swers (2006) added that the presence of women in politics not only improves representational equity but also enriches public policies that are more sensitive to women's issues such as health, education, and social protection.

Voter Behavior Theory

Voter behavior explains the factors that influence an individual's decision to choose a candidate. Downs (1957), using the theory of rational voters, stated that voters will choose the candidate they perceive as providing the greatest benefit to them. Therefore, winning strategies need to tailor political messages to voters' needs.

In this context, female legislative candidates must be able to utilize social media, face-to-face campaigning, and community activities to build rapport and present programs relevant to community aspirations.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, aiming to deeply understand the winning strategies of female legislative candidates in the 2024 General Election in Ciamis Regency. According to Sugiyono (2022), qualitative research focuses on the meaning behind the social phenomena studied through an interpretive process of empirical data. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the experiences, perceptions, and strategies used by female legislative candidates within a complex socio-political context.

Research Location and Informants

The research was conducted in Ciamis Regency, West Java Province, focusing on female legislative candidates participating in the 2024 General Election. The informants were selected using purposive sampling, selecting subjects based on the relevance and depth of their information. The informants consisted of four female legislative members, one administrator of the supporting political party's branch office (DPC), and one female political expert. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation.

Data and Data Sources

The data sources in this study are divided into primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from interviews with informants and observations of political and social activities related to the campaigns of female legislative candidates. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained through official documents, books, scientific journals, election reports, and relevant previous research on women's political winning strategies (Wance & La Suhu, 2019).

Data collection technique

Data was collected through three main techniques, namely:
1. In-depth interviews to obtain information on campaign strategies, obstacles, and factors contributing to victory.
2. Observation to observe political activities, communication patterns, and public participation in relation to female candidates.
3. Documentation to obtain secondary data in the form of archives, photos of activities, and official documents related to the election process.

Data analysis

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Data analysis was carried out interactively based on the Miles and Huberman model in Sugiyono (2022), which includes four stages:

1. Data collection, conducted through interviews, observation, and field documentation.
2. Data reduction, namely filtering and simplifying data to focus on information relevant to the research objectives.
3. Data presentation, namely compiling findings in narrative form to facilitate interpretation.
4. Conclusion drawing (verification), carried out repeatedly by checking the validity of the data until a valid and consistent meaning is obtained.

Data Validity

Data validity was tested through triangulation of sources and techniques, comparing interview results, observations, and documentation to ensure the accuracy of the information. This process was carried out continuously throughout the research to maintain the validity of the findings.

D. RESLUT AND DISCUSSION

This section will outline the results of the research conducted using a qualitative approach, focusing on inductive analysis and the dynamics of interactions between the phenomena studied. This aims to present a discussion that answers the research questions formulated in this study.

The Ciamis Regency Regional Representative Council (DPRD) is a regional legislative body responsible for numerous tasks within the regional government system. The Ciamis Regency DPRD was established after Ciamis Regency became a Dutch colonial administrative region, formerly known as Galuh Regency.

Indonesia's regional government system has changed since independence. The DPRD functioned primarily as a complement to the executive branch during both the previous and new administrations. However, following the 1998 reforms and the enactment of Law Number 22 of 1999 concerning Regional Government (later refined by Law Number 32 of 2004 and Law Number 23 of 2014), the DPRD began to assume a more strategic and independent role in legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions.

Currently, the Ciamis Regency DPRD consists of several factions drawn from various political parties that won legislative elections. The Ciamis Regency Legislative Council (DPRD) collaborates with the regent as the regional government administrator. The Ciamis Regency Representative Council (DPRD) building, located in the center of Ciamis Regency government, serves as a representation of local democracy, supporting the will of the people.

The Ciamis Regency DPRD, as a regional legislative body, continues to develop its role. Its role includes formulating regional regulations, overseeing the implementation of the Regional Budget (APBD), and channeling community aspirations for sustainable regional development.

Ciamis Regency is one of the regions in West Java Province whose social structure is still influenced by patriarchal and religious values. This condition has resulted in low female political participation, both in candidacy and election to the legislative body. According to data from the Ciamis Regency General Elections Commission (KPU), the number of female legislative candidates in the 2019 and 2024 elections was the same, at 228, with only five being elected to the DPRD out of a total of 45 available seats.

The male dominance of the DPRD reflects the persistence of gender bias in the local political process. One female DPRD member stated:

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"We are very few in the DPRD. Sometimes there's only one person per faction. But that's actually motivation to show that women can also contribute to policy." (Statement by Informant 3, 2024)

Researcher analysis: This phenomenon indicates that the affirmative action policy of a 30% quota for female legislative candidates has not been fully effective at the local level. Structural limitations, such as the still-masculine party recruitment system and limited access to political resources, hinder women's opportunities to achieve strategic positions in the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD). However, this situation also gives rise to a form of political resilience—where successful women demonstrate adaptability, courage, and the ability to manage their potential to remain active amidst male dominance.

Women's political participation in legislative elections still faces various structural and cultural challenges. Although affirmative action through the 30% quota policy has been implemented, the success of female candidates in winning elections requires a comprehensive and planned strategy. The winning strategy for female legislative candidates requires a comprehensive integration of financial, human, and social capital. Success is determined not only by the amount of campaign funds, but also by the candidate's personal capacity and ability to build a strong social network. An effective strategy must be able to convert these three assets into political capital that can overcome the structural and cultural barriers women face in politics.

1. In this study, the issues concerning the winning strategies of female legislative candidates in the general election are as follows: The 30% quota for women in parliament has not been met.
2. The persistence of patriarchal culture in society.
3. Financial limitations of female legislative candidates.

Therefore, based on these problems, the author correlates the chosen theory with field results. This theory, derived from Ronald S. Burt (1995), in Sri Budi Eko Wardani's book (2018), states that female legislative candidates must possess three assets: financial capital, human capital, and social capital.

Financial capital is a crucial aspect of a winning strategy. It is also a crucial element that cannot be ignored. In the context of campaigns, financial resources are often a major obstacle for female legislative candidates, given that their access to this capital is often more limited than that of men. Therefore, efficient financial management, creativity in utilizing existing resources, and the ability to secure funding support from third parties, such as donors or sympathizers, are all crucial strategic considerations. Adequate financial resources enable a broader campaign, whether through traditional media, social media, or direct field activities such as community meetings (blusukan).

Human capital, on the other hand, encompasses qualities such as intelligence, appearance, charisma, and the candidate's experience and expertise in understanding and engaging in political activities. This includes skills in understanding the legislative process, identifying strategic issues relevant to community needs, and demonstrating a commitment to specific groups, particularly women and marginalized groups. Human capital also encompasses the candidate's ability to utilize political party structures, build strong relationships with party leaders, and demonstrate a credible track record in politics. All of this provides legitimacy and increases voter trust in female legislative candidates.

Social capital is also a crucial element that cannot be overlooked. This encompasses the networks female legislative candidates have within the community, both through personal relationships and through formal and informal organizations. Support from communities, businesspeople, religious groups, women's organizations, and professional networks can provide a solid foundation for gaining sympathy and trust from constituents. Furthermore, the

ability to build effective communication with various levels of society is also key to leveraging this social capital. Strong social capital enables female legislative candidates to expand their support base, especially in areas that may have previously been untouched by their campaigns.

Thus, the winning strategy for female legislative candidates is a synergistic integration of these three capitals, with financial capital acting as an enabler, human capital as a differentiator, and social capital serving as a catalyst to transform structural-cultural barriers into electoral opportunities, while simultaneously addressing the challenges of women's political representation, which still faces disparities in participation.

The author further summarizes the findings based on interviews with informants. The interview results are as follows.

Strategi Pemenangan Berdasarkan Modal Finansial

In the context of the 2024 Election, financial capital is a major determining factor for legislative candidates in Ciamis Regency. However, the majority of female candidates face limited campaign funds. According to Ronald S. Burt (1995), financial capital is a material resource that can be converted into other forms of power, such as political influence.

Female legislative candidates in Ciamis develop efficiency strategies by maximizing available resources. They prioritize social activities and direct interaction over expensive conventional campaigning. One informant explained:

"We don't have much money for large billboards or advertising. So we often participate in community activities, from social gatherings to religious study groups. That's more effective." (Statement by Informant 1, 2024)

Researcher analysis: This strategy illustrates political innovation based on constraints. Under conditions of limited resources, women employed a low-cost, high-trust approach—a strategy that focused on direct interaction and building trust. This demonstrates that political success depends not solely on the amount of funding, but on the effective use of social capital and emotional connection with voters.

Winning Strategy Based on Human Capital

Human capital encompasses the personal qualities, organizational experience, and intellectual abilities of legislative candidates. In Ciamis, the majority of female legislative candidates have active experience in the Family Welfare Movement (PKK), religious organizations, and social institutions.

One informant stated:

"Many female legislative candidates here have long been active in social activities and religious study groups. So, the community already knows them as caring people."
(Statement by Informant 4, 2024)

Individual qualities demonstrated through education, ethics, and social connections are important assets for building public trust. Some candidates also participate in political and public communication training facilitated by their political parties.

Researcher analysis: In this context, researchers observe that strengthening human capital serves as a means of political legitimacy for women. They not only project an image as "women's representatives" but also as competent and rational political actors. This pattern indicates a paradigm shift from "identity-based politics" to "capacity-based politics." This strategy is effective in breaking through social stereotypes that position women as secondary actors in local politics.

Winning Strategy Based on Social Capital

Social capital is a key foundation for women's winning strategies in Ciamis Regency. Through social networks, community relationships, and support from local organizations, legislative candidates are able to build emotional connections with constituents.

One party cadre stated:

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"Winning female legislative candidates usually have strong networks. They are diligent in reaching out to the community, participating in community activities, and are well-known."

(Informant 5's Statement, 2024)

Social activities such as social gatherings (arisan), religious study groups, community service, and community visits are concrete examples of strategies for building social capital. Furthermore, the use of social media like WhatsApp and Facebook helps strengthen communication with young voters.

Researcher Analysis: Based on field observations, researchers assess that social capital plays a compensatory role for weak financial capital. In the Ciamis cultural context, which values personal relationships and social trust, closeness is the most valuable form of political capital. Female candidates who are able to manage their social networks effectively have a greater chance of winning significant votes, even without significant financial support.

These findings reinforce the views of Prasetyo and Rahayu (2017) and Suryani and Kamil (2023), who argue that women's political effectiveness in patriarchal regions depends on their ability to build emotional connections and social solidarity.

Researcher Analysis and Theoretical Relevance

The results of this study indicate that the winning strategies of female legislative candidates in Ciamis Regency are not only a response to local socio-political conditions but also reflect a form of strategic adaptation to patriarchal power structures.

Based on the researchers' analysis, the three forms of capital proposed by Burt (1995)—financial, human, and social—play complementary roles. However, in a local political context like Ciamis, social capital is the dominant variable because it can compensate for deficiencies in the other two. Interpersonal relationships, public trust, and social activities are key factors that enable women to remain competitive in a gender-biased political system.

The researchers also assessed that women's representation in the Ciamis Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) is not merely symbolic but also substantive. Women who are successfully elected tend to champion social issues such as education, health, and community economic empowerment. This demonstrates the transformation of women's political roles from simply fulfilling quotas to becoming agents of policy change at the regional level.

Further researcher analysis:

1. Women's politics in Ciamis developed through cultural, not structural, channels.
2. Women's winning strategies focused more on building trust than mass marketing politics.
3. Women's political victories reflected the successful combination of moral legitimacy and social connectivity.

Thus, this study enriches Burt's (1995) theory by showing that in the context of patriarchal regional politics, success is not only determined by social capital as a network, but also by the ability to maintain moral capital - trust and an image of integrity built within the community.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study entitled "Winning Strategies by Female Legislative Candidates in the 2024 General Election in Ciamis Regency," it can be concluded that theoretically, the three dimensions of capital proposed by Ronald S. Burt (1995) in the book by Sri Budi Eko Wardani (2018)—financial capital, human capital, and social capital—have been implemented by female legislative candidates according to their capacities. However, in practice, several factors outside of planning have resulted in a significant increase in post-election expenditures. This situation means that the implementation of these three dimensions of capital, although ongoing, has not yet fully achieved the desired level of optimality.

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The obstacles encountered in this study include a deeply rooted patriarchal culture, inhibiting financial constraints, structural barriers within the political system, and a lack of capacity building and networking for female legislative candidates. Solutions to these obstacles include overcoming patriarchal culture through a cultural-educational approach that involves all elements of society, overcoming financial limitations through creative and sustainable funding strategy innovation, transforming structural barriers through policy advocacy and system strengthening, strengthening capacity and networks through comprehensive empowerment programs, and building a sustainable supporting ecosystem through multi-stakeholder collaboration. Consistent and integrated implementation of these solutions is expected to create a more inclusive and equitable political landscape, where female legislative candidates are not only able to overcome various obstacles but also can contribute maximally to building more representative and high-quality governance.

Based on the research findings, the researchers recommend several strategic steps to strengthen the role and effectiveness of female legislative candidates in political contests, particularly at the regional level. For female legislative candidates, it is necessary to develop more innovative funding strategies, such as utilizing crowdfunding mechanisms and establishing partnerships with women's organizations and social communities concerned with increasing women's political participation. Furthermore, strengthening individual capacity is a crucial aspect that can be achieved through ongoing political education and multi-level communication training to enhance advocacy, negotiation, and public leadership skills. Female candidates are also advised to build sustainable strategic networks with various elements of society to build a strong and credible support base.

For political parties, this research emphasizes the importance of implementing systematic and sustainable women's cadre development programs, beyond simply fulfilling formal quotas. The recruitment process must also be transparent and merit-based, so that women with high capacity and integrity receive equal opportunities. Furthermore, parties are expected to provide comprehensive mentoring and proportional financial support to ensure female candidates are prepared to face the competitive dynamics of electoral politics.

Meanwhile, for the government and civil society, collective efforts are needed to improve public political literacy and education as a step to reduce the gender bias that persists in public perceptions of female leadership. The government and civil society organizations are also expected to develop targeted capacity-building programs for potential female candidates and strengthen oversight systems against the practice of money politics. This can create a healthier, more inclusive, and gender-equitable political ecosystem, ultimately boosting the quality of democracy at the local and national levels.

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