

## **(VICTORIOUS) POLITICAL STRATEGIES OF WOMAN LEADERSHIP IN INDONESIA (A STUDY OF LOCAL ELECTION IN PANDEGLANG DISTRICT, BANTEN IN 2015)**

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### **Abstract**

Fewer women have enjoyed their political victories during a local election to become the number one leaders (mayor/regent) in some local governments. During the 2015 local election, there were 35 over 123 women candidates who have won the election in their own regions. Instead of signaling a more (open) dynamics of national democracy, the participation of women succeeding in their contestation has proven the efficacy of their political strategies in taking over the challenges of male candidates who often receive more religious and cultural claims if males are more appropriate to take the responsibilities of this political position and of public services. Taking qualitative analysis and approach from the victorious case of Irna Narulita Dimiyathi in the 2015 local election in Pandeglang district, the present study is shed lights on the forms of her political strategies which have contributed to the victory of her political participation in the last local election.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Local Election, Woman Leadership, Political Strategy

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The process of democracy in the local regions, as a result of progressing political reform and atmosphere, is marked by the implementation of local election as a democratic mechanism where publics can participate in selecting their preference of leaders and fulfilling their required criteria. The Act Number 32 (2004) on 'Local government administration' and the Government Regulation (PP) No. 6 (2005) on 'the Mechanism of selection, inauguration, appointment, and termination of local government leaders and deputies' are of two main legal sources in conducting the aforementioned local election. Apart from that, this democratic practice is of paramount importance considering the possibilities of women to participate in wider public services by becoming local government leaders which are directly elected by publics.

The opportunities for women participation was evidently shown from the local election concurrently held nationwide in 2015. It was recorded that there were at least 264 provinces/cities/districts which held the election to choose the governors/deputies, mayors/deputies, and regents/deputies. According to Kompas research and development (Litbang), there were 1,654 candidacies for the local government leaders/deputies of which the 123 candidates were women. From these figures, it was declared that 46 women have enjoyed their victories in the election and taken the positions as the local government leaders and leader deputies.

Of these successful women candidates is Irna Narulita Dimiyathi. The member of the United Development Party (PPP) has succeeded in the local election at Pandeglang district. What a surprise of her victory considering the region of Pandeglang as one of the regions which is deemed to have traditional cultural and

religious beliefs positioning the men as the supreme priority for public leaderships (Nurlia & Suwaryo, 2017).

In accordance to this, the achievement of hers in taking over the dominance of males is of high interest for further study particularly held in the aforementioned district with cultural-religious beliefs on 'the campaign of male dominances'. More importantly, under the current circumstances of the dynamics and open democracy, this issue is even more relevant to study. Taking the case as the starting point, this paper will discuss how this female candidate employed her political strategies in order to invite public sympathy and finally reached victory in the local election at Pandeglang district in 2015.

## **2. LITERATURE**

According to Peter Schröder (2009: 5), political strategy refers to whole conditioning decision on chosen actions to achieve political goals. In other words, political strategy is a strategy used to realize political objectives. In an election, political strategy is an important instrument that can be used to persuade and gain sympathy from political constituents. It is a main structure in determining political actions. This is also of a paramount reference of political actions for the candidate 'Irna Narulita' and teams; thus, as a woman candidacy her nature of woman as care-giving (motherhood) is a successful campaign to win sympathy from constituents in Pandeglang.

Political strategy is an essential component in political contests such as local 'regent' election as the candidate has encountered. The aforementioned strategy is closely related to chosen approaches employed to persuade society by which they can boost votes for this candidate. More importantly in latest local election, the candidate was leading figure to run certain strategies in attracting voters to be on her own side (Schroder: 2009: 7). The meant strategies refer not only to her formal contest in 2015 election, but also refer to her long-term attempts in approaching people since her husband was in power for the last 10 years. As a result, in the last contest she took advantages from this investment as people still saw her as a 'humble' and friendly care-giving figure.

According to Surbakti (1992), political strategy is the science of techniques, ways and strategies that any politicians manage to obtain and maintain resources, and formulate and execute any intended political decisions. The absence of political strategy will make it impossible to realize expected results; be it a long-term change or a big important program. It becomes importance as, at the end, a good politician should try to realize the promises during the campaign. This strategy should not only be undertaken at the time of the campaign, but also in all stages of political communication including communication with political coalition and during the implementation of political decisions.

Political Strategy is linked with marketing activities where actions are aimed to meet human's interests and needs through the process of exchange. In line with political strategy, marketing refers attempts that a political candidate acting as a communicator needs to offer solutions for any existing social issues in community. The issues raised by a candidate must be accompanied by his/her alternative solutions which can satisfy publics and potentially receive their supports in return. In Irna's case, her success is inextricable from marketing strategies she and her team have employed by blending into communities and listening to their concerns which mostly deal with infrastructure problems. Another concern deals with women's issues such as the wellbeings of mothers and children, nutrition and women's participation in society.

## **3. METHODS**

The present study employs a qualitative approach in order to analyse the political strategies of female candidate's (Irna Narulita) victory at the 2015 local election for local government regent in Pandeglang district, Banten province. The research is to explicate the adopted patents of her political strategies in order to win the political contest at Pandeglang.

## **4. RESULT**

Pandeglang district, Banten, is one of the regions that run the 2015 local election concurrently held on December 9, 2015. In the election, there were three contestants who were under supports of political alliances in order to win the number one seat of the westernmost region of Java Island. These three candidate pairs were Hj. Ratu Siti Romlah–Yan Riadi (supported by alliances of Democratic party and The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), Hj Irna Nuralita– H Tanto Warsono Arban (Gerindra, PKB, PKS, NasDem, PBB, Hanura dan PAN), dan Aap Aptadi – H Dodo Djuanda (Independent candidacy with 93.269 public supports). The candidates were officially declared as enshrined in plenary meeting of Pandeglang election commission (KPU) Nomor 51/BA/VIII/2015, Commission decree (KPU), Nomor 46/kpts/KPU-Kab/PDG-015.015.436409/VIII and Announcement Number: 190/KPU-KAB/PDG-015.436409/VIII/2015

regarding the approval of candidate pairs for the Pandeglang regent/deputy running for the local election in 2015.

Having completed the election, the recapitulation of vote counting showed that the pairs of Irna Narulita-Tanto Warsono Arban received the highest runner with 367,547 votes. The pairs defeated the other two candidate pairs of Aap Aptadi-Dodo Juanda and Ratu Siti Romlah-Yan Riyadi with 103,296 and 58,438 votes respectively. The total votes which were considered during the election were 529,281 votes. In accordance to this, Irna has officially been in power as the regent for Pandeglang district of 2016-2020 periods.

Likewise, this victory as the election commission has declared is of another interest considering there were two women candidates running in the election namely the candidate pairs of Hj. Ratu Siti Romlah–Yan Riadi who were under supports of Democratic party and PDI of Struggle party, and other pairs of Hj Irna Nuralita–H Tanto Warsono Arban who were under supports of more parties alliances including Gerindra, PKB, PKS, NasDem, PBB, Hanura and PAN. There was also another interesting fact that the two women candidates were similarly running for the regent position while their male pairs were running for their deputies. It was the other candidate pairs of Aap Aptadi-H Dodo Djuanda who still represented male political interest which was absent from political supports, but through independent route.

More than that, the success of hers in the political contest is of high interest. Instead of dealing with traditional cultural and religious groups which are not supportive for women involvement in public domains, her success in approaching the traditional Islamic institutions (pesantren) and Muslim clerics is also a case in point which eventually results in convincing support from publics in Pandenglang.

As long as this study is concerned, Irna, who was capable of receiving the majority of votes and winning her political contestation, was inextricable from the political strategies that she has maintained for long term period. In addition to her status as the wife of the former regent of the district for two consecutive periods of 2000-2005 and 2005-2010, Irna is an active member of the United Development Party (PPP) which has brought her as a member of Indonesian house of representative seating in the commission IV during 2014-2019. Long before her political careers, she has also engaged in a number of social activities by acting as the head of Pandeglang Cancer Foundation, an advisor for the elderly nursing house of Nini-Aki Berkah, an advisor for the Natayat Nahdatul Ulama, an advisor for the Al-Hidayah Foundation, and the head of Indonesian Red Cross for Pandeglang region.

Meanwhile, in dealing with groups consistent with their cultural-religious traditions on gender-bias, Irna has taken more intimate relations with a number of Muslim clerics (ulama). As a result, she is appointed as one of the advisory board members for Fatayat organization, a woman-oriented organization under the Nahdlatul Ulama. Besides, she also acts as an advisor for Coordinating Body of Majelis Taklim for Pandeglang district. Her active involvement in a number of Islamic-based organizations has contributed to her acceptance among Muslim voters and publics.

#### **4.1 Political Strategy as a Woman Candidate**

In political contestation especially for woman candidate, a figure should take practical actions in order to get supports and be elected by society. The candidate needs to comprehend realistic strategies to cope with existing problems in addition to understanding theories. Political benchmark becomes important to see public concerns. Her gender status also has a special modality compared to other candidates. Publics have entitled her as a friendly figure. Likewise, she has become an icon amidst women communities and religion-based gatherings for women. Indeed, publics do not see any excellence from her political profile, but from her motherhood and humble care-giving concerns. The figure is also well acknowledged among societies particularly of women for her ability to blend and listen to any concerns of them and provide alternative solutions. During the campaign, the candidate always spent her time to attend any invitations from publics such as marriage and circumcision parties as well as religious-based gatherings. For these reasons, some surveys have placed her as the top runner in the contestation.

However, her achievement from the chosen political strategy is not achieved instantly; besides, Irna is not a new face in local politics. In 2011, she was once nominated as vice governor of Banten although it was not her luck, but her intimate relations with the society was able to take her as a member of national house of representatives in 2014 and finally in 2015 as a regent of Pandeglang district. Another important milestone to her current position was a solid team especially the ability to figure out the extent local public acceptance to the candidate as evident from survey results. Afterward, campaigning brand awareness was taken in order to introduce the proposed candidates and acknowledge public responses, and then take appropriate actions to approach communities in Pandeglang. Candidate promotion and imaging were intensively undertaken by a team under the brand of 'InTan' acronym (stands for Irna and Tanto). The work of this team was significant

by undertaking intensive communication to publics from the lowest level called RT (community association), and use them (considered as more knowledgeable to their own communities) as spokespersons for the candidate in their communities and strengthen and maintain the maximum gains of votes until the last stage of campaign agenda (called silent period).

The called 'success' teams were all aware the current trend of campaign that publics expected; direct involvement of the candidate to great and visit communities or well-known termed as 'Blusukan' has become a trend. This strategy has effectively brought many heads of regions, legislative candidates and even president candidates. Likewise, this approach was quite successful for the candidate in winning the hearts of society, let alone done by a woman.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The success of the elected regent Irna Narulita in winning the local election concurrently held in Pandeglang district is inextricable from the political strategies he has employed. Instead of the wife of former Pandeglang regent, the candidate was a social activist that has also contributed to her popularity and acceptance amidst the society. Her intimate relationship with Muslim-mass organizations is also another capital in her achievement. The last, the current achievement of her political career is due to the proper employment of political strategies leading her as the number one political leader in Pandeglang district.

Good communication channelings with supporting party alliances and the political elites have let her as the trusted candidate by party coalition. These parties have calculated and predicted the potential of the candidate particularly of her gender status. At the end, the thorough calculation has brought the candidate into power as expected by her party coalitions during local election in Pandeglang district.

The figure of women became the main attraction in the elections in Pandeglang district because the region is so famous for its religious lives and commitments including some objection of the nomination of women leadership. However, the candidate figure has evidently beat some doubts among communities and some religious leaders 'iyai' through intent communication established with various communities.

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