PLANET 50:50, SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND PORTRAITS THE ROAD OF BENGKULU WOMEN TOWARD THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT

AKSELERASI PEMULIHAN PASCA-PANDEMI: PERAN STRATEGIS MASYARAKAT SIPIL DI BALI

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Abstract

This study attempts to inspect the issue of gender politics in Indonesia, focusing on the electoral struggle of female legislative candidates in the region of Bengkulu. The UN's program, Planet 50:50, will be taken into account in gauging the extent of these candidates' success amidst the predominantly patriarchal culture across three elections (2009, 2014, 2019). Being a qualitative study based on discourse analysis, this study will primarily employ the concept of social capital by Pierre Bordeau (1986) and David Putnam (1993). Among the significant findings are: first, in addition to building a primordial network of religious and ethnic organizations as every Indonesian legislative candidate commonly does, female national parliament candidates in Bengkulu must work harder to create community empowerment to gain more public trust and establish the norm that women are genuinely fit and capable for election and re-election. Second, community empowerment is performed via various programs for first-time voters, youth, women, educators, and farmers; in addition to utilization of different media to promote tourism and market products. This study, hopefully, may enrich pre-existing discourse on gender and politics by juxtaposing its local practices with the ideals encapsulated in the SDG target that is Planet 50:50.

Keywords: Social capital, community development, planet 50:50, national parliament election, Bengkulu woman representation.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berupaya mengkaji isu politik gender di Indonesia dengan fokus pada perjuangan elektoral calon legislatif perempuan di wilayah Bengkulu. Program PBB, Planet 50:50, akan menjadi salah satu hal yang dipertimbangkan dalam paper ini untuk mendiskusikan sejauh mana para kandidat tersebut berhasil bertahan di tengah kuatnya budaya patriarki sepanjang tiga pemilu (2009, 2014, 2019). Sebagai penelitian kualitatif berdasarkan analisis wacana, penelitian ini akan menggunakan konsep modal sosial dari Pierre Bordeau (1986) dan David Putnam (1993) sebagai landasan utama. Temuan-temuan penting yang diperoleh dari studi ini antara lain: Pertama, selain membangun jaringan organisasi keagamaan dan suku yang primordial—seperti yang biasa dilakukan oleh setiap calon legislatif Indonesia—para calon anggota DPRD di Bengkulu juga harus bekerja lebih

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keras dalam proses memberdayakan masyarakat; tidak hanya untuk memperoleh kepercayaan masyarakat agar terpilih, tetapi juga membangun norma baru bahwa perempuan benar-benar layak dan mampu untuk dipilih sebagai anggota legislatif. Kedua, pemberdayaan masyarakat pada praktiknya dilakukan melalui berbagai program yang terutama ditujukan kepada pemilih pemula, pemuda, perempuan, pendidik, dan petani. Pemanfaatan berbagai media untuk mempromosikan pariwisata dan memasarkan produk juga dilakukan. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memperkaya wacana gender dan politik yang sudah ada dengan menyandingkan praktik lokal dengan cita-cita yang terangkum dalam target SDG yaitu Planet 50:50.

Kata Kunci: *modal sosial, pengembangan masyarakat, planet 50:50, pemilihan umum legislatif, Bengkulu, keterwakilan perempuan.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Amidst patriarchal culture, female legislative candidates must possess unique social capital in order to be elected and efficiently function as representatives. Interpersonal connections, a shared sense of identity, mutual understanding, conventions, shared values, trust, collaboration, and reciprocity all play a role in the effective functioning of social organizations. The influence of a particular actor on other actors (whether individuals or groups) can be assessed by measuring resources at their disposal, such as: physique, financial resources, facility, or intangible assets (such as primordial influence, bonding, trust, and networks). Some have defined social capital as the kind of resource tied to creative industry, tourism, or other forms of action with the intent of delivering public goods; where communal prosperity and happiness is the ultimate goal. There has been no adequate quantification regarding the concept, but it is allegedly influential among voters especially pertaining to the election of female candidates.

It is indisputable that the discourse on gender, which has emerged and spread since the 1960s, is inseparable from the history of feminist movement, which first wave began as a criticism of patriarchal culture. The second feminist wave started and reverberated after Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" was published in 1963, followed by the establishment of the National Organization for Women in 1966 in the United States. The third wave, as described by Sowards and Renegar (in Jenny Mochtar, 2008), criticized and evaluated the social roles of men and women.

Through those waves, gender issues and politics have turned into global issues that demand justice pertaining to socio-cultural constructs of men and women. This demand focuses on the equality of functions, status, and roles between the sexes in various areas of life.

Women and politics in Indonesia have a dialectical relationship, which continues to develop along with societal changes. So does the issue of women's political representation. It continues to be a topic of discussion, debate, and focus of studies by various groups. There is a growing demand for analyses focusing on the increasing importance of women representation, especially in order to strengthen their position in formal political institutions.

As such, the research question of this study is: how can the UN's 50:50 planet campaign, social capital, and its implementation be explained in the context of Bengkulu women's political portraits in three Indonesian elections (2009, 2014, and 2024) on the road toward the national parliament?

II. METHODOLOGY

The method used is a qualitative study in the form of analytical discourse. This approach consists of several stages, namely: determining the research title, finding keywords related to the research title, determining database sources, searching from several databases, determining studies to be included in the analysis based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, data extraction, and final analysis to answer research questions.

III. DISCUSSION

A. Planet 50:50 and The Bengkulu Context

'Planet 50:50 by 2030' is a United Nations (UN) campaign. It envisions the establishment of

gender equality across the world by 2030, where the "50:50" symbolizes equal sharing of the world between men and women. It was launched in September 2015 at the UN forum in New York by UN Women alongside member countries. The conference also campaigned for the "He for She" movement, which aims to encourage the participation of men for gender equality across various issues: health, education, and economy. In other words, the current concept of minimum women representation (30%) must be raised to further gender equality.

UN (United Nations) Women has designed a Flagship Programme on Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership, which has received comprehensive support from country offices. It is designed to achieve SDG Target 5.5 namely Planet 50:50 to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life". Planet 50:50 movement requires actions on multiple fronts: Supporting the development and implementation of robust legal frameworks that promote gender equality in political and electoral processes; Expanding the pool of qualified and capable women to run for election; Transforming gender norms so that women leaders in the public sphere are accepted as legitimate and effective while acknowledging men's contribution to care work; and Supporting women leaders in gender-sensitive political institutions.

Women Deputy Executive Director UN Lakshmi Puri (2016) said there are many obstacles to women's empowerment, such as institutional and structural constraints intersecting with cultural and attitudinal barriers that limit women's roles in public life. As a result, their leadership is challenged in the home, the community, and the public realm. The persistent structural challenges holding up progress in the political arena include the following: Political campaigns are expensive, and women face more significant difficulties in raising the necessary resources to finance them; Social norms discourage women's participation in many countries; Political parties and informal political networks are male dominated; Violence affects women who dare to speak up

and participate in political life in every country in the world. Just over 22 percent of all national parliamentarians are women, which means that nearly 80 percent of parliamentary members across the world are men. While there has been progress over the past 20 years, we are still far short of the 50-50 gender parity target for women in political decision-making established by the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. The bad news is that it would take at least another 50 years to reach it if barriers were not removed.

Moreover, in the Bengkulu context, a female candidate member of the national parliament must have unique social capital in its ability to function supported efficiently against patriarchal culture. It also has chances to be elected by women and young voters. Interpersonal connections, a shared sense of identity, mutual understanding, conventions, shared values, trust, collaboration, and reciprocity all play a role in the effective functioning of social organizations. People and resources may be measured in their influence on each other and larger groups through the social capital model for measuring the value of resources (physical performance, power of money, facility, or intangible assets like primordial influence, bonding, trust, and networks). Some have defined it as social capital that should provide new ideas for improving local tourism and new creative industry and supports public goods for a common goal like prosperity and happiness.

Furthermore, a female candidate member of parliament must have social capital in its ability to function supported efficiently and be elected by young voters because of the connections among its citizens. Interpersonal connections, a shared sense of identity, mutual understanding, conventions, shared values, trust, collaboration, and reciprocity all play a role in the effective functioning of social organizations. People and resources may be measured in terms of their influence on each other and larger groups through the use of the social capital model for measuring the value of resources (physical or intangible).

Some have defined it as a capital that provides new ideas and supports public goods

for a common goal, although this is different from how it has been quantified. It is indisputable that the discourse on gender, which has emerged and spread since the 1960s, is inseparable from the history of feminist movement waves and criticism of patriarchal culture. The second feminist wave resonated hard after the issuance of The Feminine Mystique, written by Betty Friedan in 1963, and the establishment of the National Organization for Women in 1966 in the United States. Sowards and Renegar (in Jenny Mochtar, 2008) suggested that the third feminist wave criticized and evaluated the social roles of men and women.

Moreover, through those waves, gender issues and politics have turned into global issues that demand justice in social and cultural construction between men and women. This demand for justice in social construction focuses on the equality and balance of functions, status, and roles between the sexes in the various walk of life. Women and politics in Indonesia are dynamically related. It continues to develop along with the current demands of the times and societal changes. And so does the issue of women's political representation. It continues to be a discussion, debate, and focus of studies by many groups.

There is a growing demand for and trend in seeing the increasing importance for women to increase and strengthen their representation in formal political institutions. The term, word, or concept of 'gender' was introduced by Hellen in Rasyidin (2018), among others. It refers to social construction in the society that is influenced by social, political, cultural, economic, religious, and environmental conditions that separate human features based on the sociocultural definition, with humans being defined on the basis of their biological physique characteristics.

According to Oakley (1972), gender is a socially-constructed distinction in behavior between men and women. Gender represents an excellent analytical tool for understanding the issue of discrimination against women in general. Gender is constructed by humans through social and cultural processes over a long period of time; without being underlain by the biological physique or concepts of divine destiny. Similarly, Hilary M. Lips (1993) defines gender as the cultural expectations of men and women.

In the case of the Bengkulu electoral district, for the 2009 general election, there were two female candidates elected to the national parliament (House of Representatives, in Indonesian: DPR RI) out of four seats allocated. This equal gender composition is in line with UN Planet's target of 50:50, i.e. equal representation of male and female legislators. The two female newly-elected representatives were Dewi Coryati (PAN) and Dian A. Syakhroza (PD); while their male counterparts were Rully Khairul Azwar (Golkar) and M.S. Badri Sampurno (PKS).

Furthermore, in the 2014 elections, out of the 4 seats allocated to Bengkulu in the DPR-RI, one seat previously occupied by a male representative was taken over by a woman, resulting in a configuration of 3 women and 1 man. They are: Elva Hartati Murman (PDI-P), Susi Marleni Bachsin (Gerindra), and Dewi Coryati (PAN) who was also an incumbent from the 2009 elections. The only male representative came from the Nasdem Party, that is Patrice Rio Capella. In other words, Bengkulu have surpassed the Planet 50:50 target, an achievement that was again repeated in 2019 election (https://republika.co.id/berita/n4kx2k/tiga-Caleg-perempuan-bengkulu-melenggang-ke-senayan). The exact same candidates won 2019 General Elections as well, except for Capella, whose nominal position as the sole male representative from Bengkulu was replaced by Mohammad Saleh (https://www.bengkulutoday.com/wanita-wanita-hebat-bengkulu-yang-duduk-di-senayan).

In the three election periods since 2009, 2014 and 2019, Bengkulu Province's women's representation in the House of Representatives rose from 50 percent (2009) to 75 percent (2014), and remained at 75 percent following the 2019 election. Curiously, the three elected parliamentary candidates were numerically registered in the DCT (Permanent Candidate List) as the first candidate of their respective parties. The only exception was Dewi Coryati, who was registered as candidate number two of

**Table 1. Representation of Women in the House of Representatives
of Bengkulu from 2009-2019 With an Allocation of 4 Seats**

No.	Legislative Election Period Dapil Bengkulu	Number of candidates Men selected	Number of candidates Women elected	Total Percentage of Women's Representation
1	2009-2014	2	2	50%
2	2014-2019	1	3	75%
3	2019-2024	1	3	75%

Source: KPUD Bengkulu Province, 2021.

PAN yet still managed to obtain sufficient votes. The following table provides an overview of the seats won and the percentage of women's representation in the House of Representatives from Bengkulu during the three legislative election periods:

B. Gender Politics vs. Patriarchy

Oakley (1972) adds that gender as a social construction is a difference in behavior between men and women. Gender is built by interaction with humans through social and cultural processes over a long period without being underlain by the biological physique and is not a divine destiny. On the contrary, Hilary M. Lips (1993) defines *gender* as the cultural expectations of men and women. Gender represents an excellent analytical tool for understanding the issue of discrimination against women in general.

The discourse on gender, emerging and spreading since the 1960s, is inseparable from the history of feminist movement waves and criticism of patriarchal culture. The second feminist wave resonated even louder after the issuance of *The Feminine Mystique*, written by Betty Friedan in 1963, and the establishment of the *National Organization for Women* in 1966 in the United States.

Sowards and Renegar (2004) suggested that the third feminist wave criticized and evaluated the social roles of men and women. Gender issues, through those waves, have turned into global issues that demand justice in social and cultural construction between men and women. This demand for justice in social construction focuses on the equality and balance of functions, status, and roles between the sexes in the various walk of life.

Women and politics in Indonesia are dynamically related. It continues to develop along with the current demands of the times and societal changes. And so does the issue of women's political representation. It continues to be a topic of discussion, debate, and focus of studies by many groups. There is a growing demand for and trend in seeing the increasing importance for women to increase and strengthen their representation in formal political institutions.

In their FGD and study of the Grand Design and Indonesia's Roadmap Towards a Planet 50:50 Gender Equality 2030, Syafuan Rozi and Abdul Azis (2020) observed that Indonesian women tend to lack representation in politics and government. For example, in the DPR-RI, from the 1999 election to the 2014 election, women's representation only ranged between 15-18 percent. In regional parliaments, the average percentage was lower than that of the central parliament. Political parties are legally mandated to ensure that 30% of their nominated candidates are women, but the policy was not yet strong enough to foster women's representation in the parliament. The nomination quota ultimately cannot guarantee the level of representation. Thus, Women's political representation in Indonesia relies too heavily on the numerically inferior presence of quality and integrity women in formal political institutions (the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial).

It is unfortunate, since there are at least three reasons why women's political representation is crucial. First, women's rights to access and participate in all political institutions is constitutionally guaranteed. *Second*, women have specific interests which can only be properly understood by women themselves. *Third*, in terms of numbers, there remain few women who have a strong position in the policy-making process in formal political institutions. the presence of women in formal political institutions is meant to erode patriarchal culture and build gender equality and justice.

Gender mainstreaming is undertaken as an effort or strategy to integrate gender-based policies in national development programs starting from planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Malau (2014) describes that numerous countries have put Gender Mainstreaming as one of their national strategies. Gender mainstreaming, in turn, requires practices of political processes to place women on par with men, which are often called gender politics.

Despite the frequent use in various discourses, until recently, there has been a lack of elaborate and precise definition of gender politics. According to Connell (2002), Gender Politics is about directing the order of gender in history. It represents a constant struggle to recreate gender relations through certain practices. On the contrary, according to Sunarto (2000), gender politics is a concept that leads to political changes that were previously patriarchal towards a state of equality devoid of discrimination against both women and men in various political spheres.

The logical consequence of fully implemented gender politics is the abolition of patriarchal norms in various fields. Concerning the concept of gender, a conclusion could be drawn from the description above that gender is a social construction in society influenced by social, political, cultural, economic, religious, and environmental conditions. Gender separates human features based on the sociocultural definition, with humans being defined based on their biological physique characteristics.

Gender issues have turned into global issues that demand justice in social and cultural construction between men and women. This demand for justice in social construction focuses on the equality and balance of functions, status, and roles between the sexes in various walks of life. The issue of women's political representation makes it increasingly important for women to increase and strengthen their representation in formal political institutions.

Women's political representation is measured by the presence of quality and integrity of women in formal political institutions (the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial) to represent other Indonesian women. The presence of women in formal political institutions is not only meant to erode patriarchal culture but also to build gender equality and justice.

Furthermore, gender politics are all political processes to place women on an equal footing with men. Gender Politics directs the order of gender in history. It represents a constant struggle to recreate gender relations through practice in a certain way. *Gender politics* is a concept that leads to political changes that have initially been patriarchal to a balanced state without discrimination against both women and men in numerous political fields. The logical consequence of gender politics in state life is the decline or weakening of patriarchal culture in numerous fields into a culture of justice and gender equality in politics and the state.

In general, politics in Indonesia is characterized by a patriarchal notion that places adult men in a central or most important position. In contrast, others, such as wives and children, are positioned according to the interests of the patriarch. The present study found data and a specific context to describe how female candidates in Bengkulu managed to win the 2019 House of Representatives (DPR) general election when they had to deal with male candidates who took advantage of the patriarchal system and culture for their political victory.

In general, the political culture in Bengkulu, Sumatra, Indonesia shows that voters are likely to have a patriarchal perspective and maintain a patriarchal culture. Women have always been subordinate to men in terms of

leading, regulating, and dominating positions, regardless of whether or not the man is capable and qualified. In this context, it is hard for female candidates to be recognized, accepted, trusted, and elected when they do not invent novel ways to break through the patriarchal culture.

In the Bengkulu constituency, female candidates are likely to choose the strategy of community empowerment as their social capital to fight the patriarchal culture that is steeped in conservative religious values and patron-client tendencies.

Patriarchal politics is a system characterized and dominated by men. In this system, men have the power to determine and make decisions, as a multilevel system has been established by a power that controls and dominates other parties. Those other parties, unfortunately, often include populations that are economically and culturally disadvantaged.

C. Community Empowerment and Social Capital

Female candidates in Bengkulu competed with men—both from other political parties and their own party—who drew support by invoking cultural and religious norms. When male candidates in Bengkulu infused patriarchal themes in their campaigns, female candidates countered by utilizing community empowerment and planting a religiously-sensitive understanding that a patriarchal perspective gave birth to unfair relations between men and women. They asserted that equality and justice are among Islam's core values by citing the Qur'anic passage of Islam's

position as "rahmatan lil alamin" (compassion for all), while indirectly saying that patriarchy is not in line with those principles.

Hence, female candidates took great effort in instilling a new understanding by stating that Islam does not differentiate between men and women, except for their piety, especially to adult and electoral constituents who received the benefits of their community empowerment programs.

With community empowerment, female candidates in Bengkulu could build networks with voters (especially first-time voters) and foster public trust, without deviating from established norms (Islam for the universe, God will see your piety only—not your gender, ethnicity, wealth, and position). That is the so-called social capital. This concept of social capital is in line with Bordeau's (1986).

In Bengkulu, information has been gathered about the factors that influence constituents' choice. The majority claimed that the candidates they elected had carried out community empowerment which was the form of social capital that became the primary consideration in choosing the female DPR RI candidates. The remainder are less significant since candidates receive payment in exchange for services or items rendered, and there are additional distinctions based on candidates' advertising, physical attributes, and communication styles. The following table reports field data regarding the primary considerations of first-time voters in selecting candidates for the DPR RI Dapil Bengkulu in the 2014 and 2019 legislative elections:

Table 2. Reasons for Voters Choosing the DPR-RI Candidate Electoral District Bengkulu in the 2014 and 2019 Legislative Elections

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Community development	444	78.3	78.3	78.3
	Money/Gifts	24	4.2	4.2	82.5
	Primordial relation	11	1.9	1.9	84.5
	Gender similarity	5	.9	.9	85.4
	Party	83	14.6	14.6	100.0
	Total	567	100.0	100.0	

Note: data collection time May - August 2021. Number of samples n = 567.
Source: Processed by researchers, 2023

As shown above, the primary concern of voters in the Bengkulu electoral district is the candidates' empowerment program; followed by party identification, gifts in the form of goods or money, primordial ties (ethnicity, religion, regional origin), and gender.

Among the important findings: first, in addition to building a primordial network of religious and ethnic organizations akin to those built by male candidates, female national parliament candidates in Bengkulu must work harder to build community empowerment to gain more public trust and instilling the norm that women also have a real capacity for election and re-election. Second, community empowerment is performed by organizing life skills training, promoting scholarships, seeking capital, and product marketing. In addition, it utilizes new media to promote tourism areas and constituents' superior products.

Those conditions are also in line with the study conducted by Ramón and Harris (2018), where social capital is a determining factor for the success of political empowerment in a community in Ghana. It was found that utilizing social capital in political empowerment increased community involvement in politics and created political efficacy within the community.

Putnam (1993) defines *social capital* as networks, trust, and norms facilitating coordination and mutually beneficial cooperation. In this case, social capital has a significant role in understanding group actions or activities by facilitating coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.

Social capital refers to a set of resources embedded in relationships of mutual trust and cooperation among individuals. Lin (1995) describes that social capital is often associated with sociability, social networks, family ties, social support, trust, reciprocity, group solidarity, community strengthening, social justice, and participation in civil society. However, prior to developing this theory, other theories later became the basis, among others being the social resource theory, which formulates and tests several propositions regarding the relationship among various embedded resources in social

networks and the level of socioeconomic achievement. In this context, *resources* are defined as valued goods within the community.

Studies conducted through empowering women in various ways showed that the frequently made efforts to increase women's elect-ability or representation in politics had not utilized social capital. Based on the 2003 UNDP data, several examples of case studies of women's empowerment were undertaken in various countries to increase women's representation. In the case of Armenia, a women's leadership forum (a civil society organization) was established to mobilize women and urged the government to provide a minimum mandatory quota for women in parliament.

The UNDP report (2003) also recounts the experiences of female candidates in such developed countries as Australia, Canada, and the United States, which also made efforts to encourage female candidates through fundraising networks, diversifying candidate recruitment and subsidizing campaign funds, and providing training and capacity building for female candidates. Efforts to increase women's representation should not only be performed by political parties and the government by making minimum quota policies, subsidizing funds, and strengthening capacity. As figures who have goals for change and social progress in their communities, women themselves should also make creative efforts for themselves to be elected by the community by strengthening their social capital.

In their study of the Grand Design and Indonesia's Road-map Towards a Planet 50:50 Gender Equality 2030, Syafuan Rozi and Abdul Azis (2020) see that Indonesian women, in general, tend in the context of politics and government to have a low level of representation. For example, in the central parliament, from the 1999 election to the 2014 election, women's representation was only around 15-18 percent. In regional parliaments, the average percentage was lower than that of the central parliament. The mandatory 30 percent quota for women in nomination during elections by political parties was not yet strong enough to encourage the level of women's

Table 3 Reasons for Voting for Certain Candidates in the 2014/2019 Election

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Alasan Memilih Caleg Tertentu				
Valid	religion	26	4.6	4.6	4.6
	ethnic	6	1.1	1.1	5.6
	networks	36	6.3	6.3	12.0
	speech	14	2.5	2.5	14.5
	fisical perf.	11	1.9	1.9	16.4
	gift	14	2.5	2.5	18.9
	attention	20	3.5	3.5	22.4
	Com.dev.	423	74.6	74.6	97.0
	Fam rel.	4	.7	.7	97.7
	abstain	13	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	567	100.0	100.0	

Note: data collection time May - August 2021. Number of samples n = 567.
Source: Processed by researchers, 2023

representation in parliament. The nomination quota and the level of representation have not run in parallel or harmony. Women's political representation is nothing but the presence of quality and integrity women in formal political institutions (the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial) to represent other Indonesian women.

There are at least three important reasons for this. First, women have political rights as guaranteed by the constitution to access and are present and play a role in all political institutions. *Second*, women have specific interests, and those who understand them better are women themselves. *Third*, in terms of numbers, few women have a powerful position in the policy-making process in formal political institutions. In this way, the presence of women in formal political institutions is meant to erode patriarchal culture and build gender equality and justice.

D. Portraits of Bengkulu women toward the national parliament

Data on the elect-ability of Bengkulu woman female candidates running to represent voters in the National Parliament (DPR RI) has been gathered. The analysis of the questionnaire's responses revealed that Dewi Coryati received up to 47.4% of the votes cast by respondents for DPR RI candidates in the Bengkulu Dapil in the 2014 and 2019 elections, followed by Susi MB (20.26%), Elva Hartati (16.23%), and M. Saleh (6.00%). The selection criteria for various candidates in the 2014 and 2019 elections are shown in the following table.

In this section, the reasons for choosing the name of a particular female candidate are explained. The result shows that the main reason respondents chose the candidate was due to the community empowerment program offered or carried out by the candidate (74.6%), the second reason was because of the religious activities facilitated by the candidate (4.59%), the third reason was because of attentiveness the candidate (3.53%), and the fourth reason was because of gifts given by the candidate (2.47%). There are also those who vote because of the candidate's eloquence (2.47%); some say they vote because of the candidate's physical appearance (1.94%); reasons for ethnic or regional similarities with the candidate (1.06%); and a family relationship with the candidate (0.71%). Meanwhile, there were 2.29% of voters who abstained. Thus, the hypothesis that voters choose female candidates for their community empowerment programs tends to be proven. There are 74.6% who agree

with this. This also indicates that the first-time voters in the Bengkulu electoral district in the 2009 and 2004 elections tended to weigh rational considerations.

Based on the preferences of voters in Indonesia, especially in the Bengkulu Constituency (where four DPR-RI seats were contested), the representation of women was around 50% in the 2009 Election, temporarily 100% after the 2014 Election due to a recall which turned over Patrice Rio Capella's seat to a female representative, and 75% on the 2019 Election. From here, it can be inferred that female candidates tend to gain more support in their legislative campaign compared to male candidates. The reason for this, it shall be argued, is none other than community empowerment or social capital. Pranarka and Vidhyandika (1996) describe that the community empowerment process (including first-time voters and female voters) has two tendencies.

First, the empowerment process emphasizes the process of giving or transferring some power, authority, or ability to the community so that individuals are more empowered. However, whether the empowerment process itself is one of the factors behind female legislative candidates' electoral triumph remains a problem that needs to be studied further. Voters in Bengkulu Province tend to be considered as predominantly traditional and ideologically motivated, instead of being driven by policy preferences of candidates or political parties. Traditional voters, in turn, are the type of voters readily available for mobilization during the campaign period (Rohrschenaider, 2002).

This study of community empowerment is interesting since it is associated with the character of first-time voters during the 2009 and 2014 elections, which is different from the traditional voters of the previous generation. The latter tend to prioritize socio-cultural closeness, values of origins, understanding, and religion as a measure for voting. This type of voter usually prioritizes the candidate's figure and personality, myths, and the track records of the candidate. Among some defining characteristics, traditional voters tend to be associated with low levels of education as well as conservative values and beliefs. .

Apart from the characteristics of traditional voters, the intricate configuration of electoral wards in Bengkulu are another factor that should be considered. The electoral wards of Bengkulu Province are divided into several electoral wards, including Bengkulu City, North Bengkulu, South Bengkulu, Central Bengkulu, North Bengkulu, Seluma, Rejang Lebong, Lebong, Kepahiang, and Muko-Muko. Since Bengkulu province consists of 1,300 *kelurahan*/ villages, winning one of the four available DPR-RI seats is an arduous political endeavor.

In the context of the election, the community empowerment process—which reflects the capability and social capital of a female legislative candidate—can be one of the solutions to win votes in their electoral wards. In this sense, empowerment can be roughly defined as an effort to obtain or provide power, strength or ability to disadvantaged individuals and communities. It is done by identifying, analyzing, and determining every facet of a circumstance—from needs, potentials, and the nature of the problem at hand—while at the same time providing alternative solutions by optimizing the subjects' independently owned resources and potentials.

Bengkulu Province constituency is a massive challenge for all legislative candidates; even more so for female legislative candidates. Yet the case of Bengkulu also serves as a proof that women can compete and win the arduous political battle. This opens pathways for further research in several areas. The correlation between women candidates' electability and their relationship with first-time voters, focusing on the proportion of first-time voters who strongly consider the prospect of having representations from their locality (electoral wards) before supporting and electing female candidates who run for DPR-RI. Furthermore, the study on Political support tends to lack explanations pertaining to social capital. Pre-existing studies on the efforts to empower women in the political arena, too, tend to underutilize social capital as an analytical tool.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The following are a few of the study's key conclusions and findings. First, UN Women has created a flagship program on the political leadership and empowerment of women, which has gained full support from national offices. The establishment of Planet 50:50 as one of the SDGs, which is to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life," it is intended to do this. In the Bengkulu electoral district, in the 2009 election, two female candidates were elected on the road to the national parliament (DPR RI) out of the four seats allotted. This equal share of gender representation is in line with UN Planet's target of 50:50, i.e., gender equality between male and female in the political realm. Moreover, after the three elections in 2009, 2014, and 2019, Bengkulu Province's women's representation in the House of Representatives rose from 50 percent (2009) to 75 percent (2014).

Second, in addition to building a primordial network of religious and ethnic organizations as their male counterparts also do, female national parliament candidates in Bengkulu must work harder to build community empowerment in order to gain more public trust and establish a normative understanding that are fit and capable for election and re-election.

Third, community empowerment by women candidates in Bengkulu is mainly targeted at first-time voters, youth, women, educators, and farmers. It was done by conducting life skills training, promoting scholarships, seeking capital, and marketing local products. In addition, it utilizes new media to promote tourism areas and constituents' superior products.

Four, there is a lack of studies about the analysis of first-time voter behavior in Indonesia in relation to legislative elections (2014 and 2019) in the Bengkulu constituency, despite the unique phenomenon that is the high electability of female candidates. The voters in the Bengkulu constituency are likely to be traditional-emotional-opportunist voters or start to shift into modern-rational-calculative voters. Based on the aforementioned elaboration, further studies are recommended   .

Five, the traditional-emotional-opportunist voters are indicated by a tendency to vote candidates based on ethnic ties, religion, physical attractiveness, and promise of material benefits. Their involvement also tends to result from active mobilization of political actors, instead of being organic and autonomous. The modern-rational-calculative voters are the opposite, voting due to reasons such as: trust in legislative candidates' social capacity in creating community empowerment programs; closeness; concerns that developed as a product of experiential learning between the two elections; and candidates' capability of representing local concerns on a national level. They vote since with consideration of issues and programs raised by legislative candidates, especially pertaining to scientific and technological advancement in their area. To put it proverbially: the rational voter prefers to be taught how to fish rather than being given a fish that would only feed them for one day.

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