

Political Capital and Gender Strategies of Women Legislators in the Matrilineal Realm

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Abstract

The representation of women in the West Sumatra regional legislative for the 2024-2029 period has increased; however, it has not yet reached the 30% quota. A total of 10 women were elected out of 65 seats, or approximately 15.38%. This phenomenon is not significantly different from that in other regions, even though West Sumatra is known as the only matrilineal region that glorifies the central position of women. Female legislators have employed various strategies to gain the trust of the community. The purpose of this study is to analyze the political capital and gender position in the winning strategies of elected female legislators in the matrilineal area. The research method is descriptive qualitative, with data collection techniques in the form of interviews and content analysis of publications. The findings show that the majority of elected legislators have political capital in the form of organizational experience, connections with influential figures, and the use of gender proximity to attract the trust of female voters, who are the main target. The essence of matrilineal areas is not considered to have much influence on the victory of women in West Sumatra. This research contributes to the development of political and women's studies by examining the realities of the quality of and obstacles to women's representation in policymaking. Furthermore, this research provides recommendations and evaluations regarding the existence of systems that better accommodate women's presence in politics.

Keywords: Gender, Political Capital, Representation

Introduction

As a democratic country, Indonesia regularly holds general elections to select rulers and government officials. Przeworski defines democracy as a regime that holds general elections to fill government positions (Diamond, 2003). Meanwhile, Robert A. Dahl views elections as a parameter of a country's democracy by selecting several candidates through voting, where the candidate with the most votes wins the right to fill a seat in government (Dahl, 1956). The electoral system is a mechanism for transferring voters' preferences to a representative body, at both national and regional levels.

In practice, the electoral system has a set of mechanisms that are structured and regulated proportionally, ranging from *balloting*, *district magnitude*, *electoral formula*, representation, *threshold*, and others. Representation remains an important issue in the implementation of elections in Indonesia. This is because there are still minority groups that are not fully represented, one of which is women. There are continuing calls for women to be represented in the legislature. The lack of female representation in policy-making institutions has resulted in various women's interests not being accommodated, with policies tending to be masculine and lacking a gender perspective. Elections can essentially be an instrument and a means of gathering support from all parties to improve the quality and quantity of women's roles, because through elections, the public can bring women into policy-making institutions as their representatives.

In Indonesia, efforts to increase women's representation in representative institutions continue to be pursued. Regulations on a 30% quota for women's representation or affirmative action have been stipulated in several laws related to

elections and political parties, and continue to undergo changes and refinements to this day: starting from Law No. 31 of 2002 on "Political Parties"; Law No. 12 of 2003 on "Elections" Article 65; Law No. 22 of 2007 on Election Organizers, which stipulates a minimum of 30% female representation; Law No. 2 of 2008 on "Political Parties," which requires political parties to include a minimum of 30% female representation in their establishment and management at the central level through Articles 52, 53, and 55, the policy of implementing a zipper system which stipulates that for every three candidates proposed by a political party in the elections, there must be at least one female candidate; Law No. 2 of 2011 concerning Amendments; to Law No. 10 of 2008 concerning Political Parties which regulates the principle of gender equality, specifically updating the regulations on the role of women in political parties in Article 2 paragraph (2), Article 2 paragraph (5), and Article 29 paragraph (1a), which stipulate that "The establishment and formation of political parties as referred to in paragraph (1) shall include 30% (thirty percent) representation of women." Meanwhile, for the 2024 elections, PKPU 10 of 2023, Article 8, paragraph 1, letter (c), was issued, instructing that the list of prospective candidates must include at least 30 percent female representation in each electoral district, with at least one female prospective candidate for every three candidates.

To date, the election of women as legislative candidates has not met affirmative quotas, either at the central or regional levels. Although there has been a positive trend in the election of women in each election period, it has not been sufficient to meet the established quotas. At the national level, women's representation in the 1999 elections was 9%, in the 2004 elections 11.8%, in the 2009 elections 18%,

in the 2014 elections 14%, in the 2019 elections 20.5%, and in the 2024 elections approximately 22%. The same trend also occurred in West Sumatra province. The number of women in the legislature tended to fluctuate, but still did not exceed the affirmation limit. In the 2009 elections, women's representation was 12.7%, in the 2014 elections it was 9.2%, and in the 2019 elections it was less than 10%, namely Yunisra Syahiran from the Gerindra party, Siti Izzati Aziz from the Golkar party, Leli Arni from the PDIP party, and Mesra from the Gerindra party. In the 2024-2029 period, there was an increase in the number of female legislators elected. A total of 10 legislative seats out of 65 available were won by women. The names of the elected female legislators were Sitti Izzati Aziz, Hj. Zaksai Kasni, and Nela Abdika Zamri from Golkar, Endarmy from the Nasdem Party, Nurna Eva Karmila from PKS, Yesi Endriani and Aida from the Democratic Party, Lastuti Darni from PAN, and Sri Kumala Dewi from PDIP. Of these 10 elected female legislators, several were new names who managed to win the most votes in their respective electoral districts.

Several studies have linked the level of female representation to a number of factors, such as social, economic, cultural, political, and historical factors in the local political environment and patriarchal ideology. Ridha Illahi et al. (2023) state that the low number of women elected to the legislative body in West Sumatra was due to weak regulations, minimal socialization and activities of female legislative candidates with the community, low commitment of political organizations to women's empowerment, gender-biased political party policies, and limited political capital. Gender inequality still colors women's struggle to compete with men for

strategic positions in government. In addition to the opportunities provided by regulations, women must have strong capital, capacity, and capabilities. To enter the masculine world, women must have power, power relations, and, in particular, political capital. Political capital is important for a candidate in a general election. It can be said to be one of the assets a candidate needs to win a political contest. Casey (2008) identifies seven types of political capital that a legislator must have: institutional capital, social capital, human capital, economic capital, symbolic capital, moral capital, and cultural capital.

Institutional capital refers to a system and pattern of institutional relationships that cooperate and achieve the same goals, such as political parties. Second, social capital concerns networks of relationships as a source of social position to obtain a position in a social group. Third, human capital resources include the intellectual abilities or qualities of an actor. Fourth, economic capital is in the form of wealth or funds. Fifth, symbolic capital is the framing and figure of the actor. Sixth, cultural capital is the cultural environment that supports the actor's program. Seventh, moral capital is an important attraction for actors who want to win hearts. The higher a person's political capital, the greater their chances of winning in the general election system.

Elections are activities for gaining the trust and votes of people. A candidate can emerge as the winner if they are able to convince voters to elect them as their representative. One way to attract voter support and sympathy is by optimizing

issues, conveying a vision and mission, and selling programs to the public. The presence of women in the legislature is expected to be an extension of women's aspirations in producing gender-friendly policies. Female legislators can, in turn, be representatives of women in the policy-making arena. Hanna F. Pitkin (1967:11) emphasizes that a person can be a representative of their group through two types of representation, namely substantive and descriptive. Substantive representation is where a representative acts for those they represent. Descriptive representation is understood as a form of representation in which a representative stands for people who are objectively similar. Meanwhile, Anne Philips divides political representation into two forms: the politics of ideas and the politics of presence.

The presence of women in parliament is mandatory. The presence of women in parliament is important because it can create women's agency and become an extension of women's voicing and fighting for gender-sensitive regulations in the policymaking arena. Therefore, female legislators can use this opportunity to promote themselves and promise to act and fight on behalf of women's voices. In addition, the presence of women's representatives in parliament is expected to lead to an increase in the number of women in other decision-making institutions. Naturally, women have the potential to garner full support from women's groups. Therefore, gender issues have often become a strategy for female candidate programs. The use of gender issues and the selection of women's empowerment programs are strategies

that female candidates tend to choose to gain votes.

West Sumatra is a region famous for its matrilinealism, in which women have long held central positions and roles. The matrilineal customs that have developed in West Sumatra place women in a special position and involve them actively as successors, heirs to property, keepers of economic assets, owners of "*rumah gadang*" (traditional houses), and decision makers. The unique matrilineal culture practiced in West Sumatra should provide more opportunities and capital for women. The challenges of life in other patriarchal areas would certainly differ if they were in matriarchal areas.

Theoretically, matrilineal societies are often assumed to offer women a greater social space than patriarchal societies. Patriarchy is a sociocultural system that places men in positions of greater power and prominence. In the patriarchal concept, leadership and decision-making positions are exclusively held by men, often relegating women to secondary roles. The patriarchal dogma claiming that women are weak frequently limits their access and confines them to the private sphere. In the political realm, patriarchal culture often leaves no room for women's participation; even when they do exist, women are required to fight harder and possess greater resources

West Sumatra is a region that follows a matrilineal system. Conceptually, matrilineality is a social system based on the maternal line. In Minangkabau, women hold significant positions within the traditional structure, in the inheritance of ancestral property, and in the lineage. The

matrilineal system can essentially serve as a social and symbolic legitimization of women's roles. Women in Minangkabau are often known as *Bundo Kanduang* or *Mando Soko*. The role of *Bundo Kanduang* is on par with that of traditional male leaders, such as the *Mamak*.

The *Bundo Kanduang* holds the authority to offer advice and serve as a point of reference in community policy. Indeed, the authority of the *Mande Soko* is even greater; the *Mande Soko* has the authority to make recommendations or offer advice regarding the appointment of community leaders. In reality, the central role of women in the customary sphere has not translated directly into equality in the formal political arena. This is evident in the still low representation of women in the legislative bodies of West Sumatra, which has never exceeded 30 percent. This certainly highlights the paradox between the cultural power of women in a matrilineal system and their limited access to modern political structures. Women's strategic positions in the customary sphere do not always translate into strong access to modern political power.

Matrilineality operates primarily within cultural and genealogical spheres but has not yet fully transformed power dynamics within the formal political system. In practice, formal politics remains steeped in patriarchal political culture, male elite dominance, party structures, and skewed social constructs regarding male and female leadership.

Most studies assume that women's strong position in traditional customs directly leads to increased political

participation and representation of women. Does adhering to a matrilineal system provide an additional advantage for women in West Sumatra, or do legislative candidates instead employ other strategies to gain public trust? However, in reality, does the use of the matriarchal system influence women's opportunities to sit in policymaking institutions, or does the existence of matriarchy fail to penetrate the world of public competition that is synonymous with masculinity?

Giscka Canna Indira S and Chusnul Mariyah (2021) assert that access to and control over political and social capital remain important aspects of a female legislative candidate's victory. In line with this, Joni Firmansyah and Shafira Faradhila (2022) also found that the victory of female legislative candidates was due to their possession of political capital that could support their election. Meanwhile, Yenni Yuniati and Dedeh Fardiah Citra (2017) found that female legislative candidates in Sumbawa attempted to attract female voters by highlighting women's issues, paying a 30 percent quota. The same thing was also raised in the writing of Novaria Maulina, et al (2019), stating that in the 2019 legislative elections in South Kalimantan, the communication strategy of female candidates in gaining public support tended to focus on political messages about women's empowerment and children's education.

Thus, this study contributes to enriching research on gender and local politics through a critical analysis of the paradox between matrilineal culture and the low political representation of women in West Sumatra. This research attempts to

analyze the political capital theory of Pierre Bourdieu and the concept of politics of presence proposed by Anne Phillips through a theoretical approach. Political capital theory is used to explain how access to political power is not solely determined by the formal rules of democracy but also influenced by the possession of social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital by political actors. Although culturally, women have received recognition in the Minangkabau matrilineal system, the question remains: does this have implications for formal political practice? Meanwhile, Anne Phillips' concept of politics of presence is used to examine the importance of women's presence in political institutions as part of representation that is not only formal but also substantive. The limited presence of female representatives indicates that women's space in the public sphere remains limited.

Based on the above phenomenon, the author is interested in investigating the significant influence of a female candidate's political capital and the extent to which gender issues are used in female candidates' winning strategies, as well as whether these two factors are the reasons for the election of women to sit on the policymaking bench in West Sumatra Province in 2024, so that the representation figures for this period will increase. This is also inseparable from the social construct, believing that West Sumatra is actually the only matrilineal-based region in Indonesia. For this reason, the author has titled this paper "Political Capital and Gender Strategies of Female Legislative Members in the Matrilineal Realm.

Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative method to analyze how modal capital and gender issues contribute to increasing women's representation. Data collection techniques in the form of interviews and various sources were used to ensure the depth of analysis and validity of findings, such as academic literature and content analysis of publications. This approach focuses not only on representation, but also on the analysis of social, cultural, and power relations that influence the presence of female representatives.

Research data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Research informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique consisting of female legislative members. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach. The analysis process began with transcribing interview results, data reduction, coding, identifying main themes, and drawing conclusions. To maintain the validity and credibility of the data, this study used source and method triangulation techniques.

This study employs an analytical framework based on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of political capital and Anne Phillips' concept of the politics of presence to understand how the distribution of political capital and the structure of representation influence women's participation in formal politics in West Sumatra. This research contributes to the development of political and women's studies by examining the realities of the quality of and obstacles to women's representation in policymaking. Furthermore, this research provides recommendations and evaluations regarding the existence of

systems that better accommodate women's presence in politics.

Result And Discussion

1. The Political Capital of Female Legislative Candidates in West Sumatra

Women's participation is a human right guaranteed by the state. The 1945 Constitution states that men and women have equal opportunities and are free from discriminatory treatment, one of which is that women have full rights to be in the political sphere, including their involvement in the legislature. To date, women's involvement in the political sphere remains an issue that continues to be discussed and pursued. Although regulations already accommodate opportunities for women's representation, the reality after the elections shows that the percentage of women elected is still low, despite a recorded increase compared to the previous period. In West Sumatra, 10 women won legislative seats. However, this number is still far from the number of men, who won 55 seats out of a total of 5 available seats.

Bourdieu (1977) states that a person participating in competition must have sufficient capital to win, including cultural, social, economic, symbolic, political, and other forms of capital that influence and support each other. Social capital is the power that a person has, including the ability to build relationships or networks within and outside the party, their figurehead status in the community, organizational experience, and involvement in institutions. Political and symbolic capital are a person's power derived from their experience in leading the community, track record, fame, incumbency, and position in society. Meanwhile, economic capital is the power

derived from the availability of funds and logistics.

The election of 10 female legislators to the West Sumatra regional legislative body and their ability to break through male dominance was due to the capital they possessed. Pierre Bourdieu argues that individuals accumulate various types of capital, including social, economic, and cultural capital. *First*, social capital. Social capital is the power possessed by a person, including the ability to network both within and outside a party. Ani N. Retnoningias (1997) mentions three classifications of female politicians: (1) women who enter politics because they have intellectual and organizational abilities; (2) women who obtain political positions because of their relationships with certain men who have important political positions; (3) female politicians who achieve political positions because they have colluded with the bureaucracy. Some of the female legislators elected to the West Sumatra DPRD are women who are active and hold important positions in their parties, including Neldaswenti, who is active in the Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP). She becomes female representative for electoral district 6, number one on the list, which covers 5 regencies and cities, Tanah Datar, Padang Panjang, Sawahlunto, Sijunjung, and Damasraya; Sitti Izati, a senior female politician from the Golkar Party; Endarmy from the Nasdem; and Nurna Eva Karmila, who has been active in the party since 1998. However, there are also female legislators who were not born and raised as party cadres. Nela Abdika Zamri, for example, did not begin her involvement in politics as an active party member, but only as an effort to fulfill the female quota:

"Actually, getting involved in politics for the first time was not my dream or desire. Initially, it was only to fulfill the quota for women. No one in my family had a political background. My parents are teachers, and the rest of my family are farmers and ranchers, so I never thought of entering the political world. I was able to enter politics because I was asked to help fill the female quota for the 2019-2024 period."

"Sebenarnya pertama kali ikut politik bukan cita cita, bukan keinginan, awalnya hanya untuk melengkapi kuota perempuan. Latar belakang keluarga tidak ada yang politik, orang tua berprofesi sebagai guru, dan keluarga lain hanya petani dan peternak, sehingga tidak pernah terpikir untuk terjun ke dunia politik. Awal mulanya bisa terjun ke politik, karena diminta tolong untuk mencukupi kuota perempuan pada periode 2019-2024"

In addition to being active in political parties, female legislators must also be able to demonstrate their existence and active role in community organizations. The social capital of female legislators in West Sumatra can be broadly grouped into two models. The first is their effectiveness within the party, which can influence access to structures, campaign resources, and cadre loyalty. The second is their effectiveness in external organizations, which can serve to create social relations, public legitimacy, and trust. This is useful for building public trust in the capabilities and abilities of female legislators in the public sphere. In the implementation of elections, participation in various organizations can increase popularity or

reputation, and can also generate network strength, cadre loyalty, and community support. Candidates who are active in organizations are believed to have more experience, be able to work with many people, be good at speaking in front of large groups, build relationships with influential people, and have other experiences. Neldaswenti said that, in order to compete, women must have a number of things: public trusts and networks

"How can women advance and enter policymaking positions if the community does not trust them? To foster public trust, women must demonstrate concrete actions and showcase their qualities. Women must also maximize every networking opportunity, regardless of how small it is. Whenever there is an activity, women must dare to participate because through this, they can interact and build relationships with the wider community"

"Bagaimana perempuan bisa maju dan masuk ke dalam bangku pngambil kebijakan, jika masyarakat tidak percaya. Nah untuk menumbuhkan kepercayaan masyarakat, perempuan harus menunjukkan tindakan nyata, harus menunjukkan kualitas diri. Perempuan juga harus mampu memaksimalkan setiap peluang jaringan dari lingkup sekecil apapun, setiap ada kegiatan, perempuan harus berani untuk ikut serta karena dengan tersebut, perempuan ini bisa berinteraksi, menjarung relasi dengan masyarakat luas"

To increase their networks and public support, the female legislators of

West Sumatra have improved their strategy by actively participating in a number of potential organizations. Neldaswenti is active in various organizations in Sawahlunto, such as chairing the Integrated Service Center for Women and Children Empowerment (P2TP2A), chairing GOW, the Indonesian Women Entrepreneurs Association of Sawahlunto, and chairperson of the Indonesian Special Children Family Communication Forum (Forkesi). Sitti Izaati, a female legislator from the Golkar party, is active in organizations as part of her strategy to build relationships and networks. Sitti Izaati actively builds relationships with the government and actively attends development planning meetings in the *nagari* (village), of which there are at least 103 in her electoral district, and is required to attend community events.

She also builds and participates in informal organizational networks such as the PKK, farmer groups, *majelis taklim*, *bundo kanduang*, and other groups. Nela Abdika Zamri, a Golkar Party legislator, applies a strategy of approaching and building relationships with every traditional leader and woman, such as *bundo kanduang*. Endarmy, a senior Nasdem politician, is known as a politician who often goes out into the field and is active in social activities, including UMKM. Sri Kumala Dewi, a representative from the PDI party, is known to be active in women's empowerment through UMKM and is also a sharia business owner. The same is done by Nurva Eva Karmila, a female legislator from the PKS party, whose political strategy includes being active in every party activity, preaching, reciting the Quran, as well as opening up and providing the widest possible access to communication and openness to the community

Women's activities in the public sphere must, of course, be supported by their knowledge and skills. A woman must have broad knowledge and good public speaking skills in order to gain public trust. Based on the research findings, in terms of educational background, most of the elected female legislators have a high level of education, including 7 bachelor's degree graduates (Nurva Eva Karmila, Dra.Hj.Sitti Izzati Aziz, Endarmy, Lastuti Darni, Hj.Yesi Endriani, Aida, and Sri Kumala Dewi); and 3 master's degree graduates (Hj. Zaksai Kasni, S.E, M.M, drh. Nela Abdika Zamri, S.KH, M.M, M.Si, Ir. Hj. Neldaswenti, M.Si). A high level of education has an impact on their mindset, analytical understanding, and the significance of their political performance as legislative members.

Experience in leading the community, track records, and name recognition also adds value for a candidate in a general election. The concept of open elections requires candidates to be able to gain sympathy and attention from the public to win the most votes. Experience and actions in the public sphere that involve many people make candidates more recognizable. In this case, incumbent candidates have a head start over new candidates. When a woman becomes a member of the legislature, she has more opportunities to implement programs that win the sympathy of the people, and her duties in the next election become easier. The public already knows how the incumbent candidates perform and what they have done for the community. In addition, incumbent candidates are believed to already have a sufficiently large mass and network. However, if, during their previous term, these legislators fail to

make decisions that satisfy the public, act poorly, or are considered to have made no contribution to the community, this will have a significant impact on the loss of votes in the next election. The female incumbent legislators from West Sumatra who successfully returned to office for the 2024 term are Nela Abdika Zamri, Sitti Izati Azis, and Endarmy. Becoming famous and well-known is certainly the first step to being noticed by voters, so it is not uncommon for female legislative candidates, whether incumbents or newcomers, to use social media as a personal-branding strategy. In this technological age, female legislators often share their activities through personal branding with a good, positive image, family warmth, and a pro-people stance in order to create a good reputation on social media on a massive scale.

Closeness or family ties are also one of the factors that support a candidate's popularity. The existence of a political dynasty or connections to prominent figures attached to a candidate is an added value that makes it easier for them to be recognized by the public. In the context of local politics in West Sumatra, the success of female legislative candidates is also linked to their strategic relationships with prominent or public figures, whether personal or otherwise. Bourdieu's concept of political capital emphasizes the importance of reputation and social legitimacy. Female legislators' strong relationships with certain figures or public figures become their capital and strength to be able to access more votes and obtain moral and practical support during the campaign. Women's access to legislative institutions is not only due to their personal

abilities, but can also be driven by factors such as the support of male figures behind them.

The majority of female legislators in West Sumatra for 2024-2028 have ties to certain public figures. Most of the female legislators in West Sumatra are wives, children, or relatives of political actors or former officials who have held government positions. Among them are Neldaswenti, the wife of the former deputy regent of Sawahlunto for the 2018-2023 term, Nurna Eva Karmila, the wife of the former deputy mayor of Bukittinggi for the 2021-2024 term; Yesi Endriani, the wife of the former Mayor of Bukittinggi, Ramlan Nurmatias; Sitti Izzati Aziz, the daughter of a well-known *Tuan* in Pariaman, where her family, tribe, and culture have a very strong influence; Lastuti Darni, the sister of the Chair of the Solok Regency DPD PAN; and Zaksai Kasni, the wife of Adi Gunawan, Deputy Chair of the Dharmasraya DPRD for three terms (2004-2009, 2009-2010, and 2019-2024), who also served as Regent of Dharmasraya from 2010 to 2015. With their connections to public figures, female legislators who are part of political dynasties are known even before they enter the race for votes. Someone from a political family can take advantage of the image associated with that family to gain the trust of voters, greater attention, media coverage, and existing networks and organizations. The facts show that very few female legislative candidates in the West Sumatra DPRD who are not members of political families have been successful. This illustrates the lack of opportunities for women who do not have political influence or connections to compete for parliamentary seats.

The current victories of female legislators in West Sumatra cannot be separated from the existence of political kinship networks, close ties to party elites, and family relationships with male political figures. While there are no significant statements claiming that a female legislator's electoral victory is due to her having connections or relying on the power of male figures, by having relationships with political officials, these female legislators have already been known to the public, have had the opportunity to empower themselves earlier, and have been able to engage directly with the community long before the election campaign began. Their family names are already known to the public, they have established political networks, and, of course, they find it easier to secure party support. This demonstrates that women's political legitimacy is still often "conveyed" through male figures; women gain access through domestic and family connections.

In addition to social capital, economic capital empowers women to compete in male-dominated spheres. Economic capital is related to the availability of funds and finances during the election period. For legislative candidates, funding for candidacy and campaigns comes from three main sources: (a) personal wealth, (b) contributions from immediate or extended family members, peer groups, and community networks, and (c) party assistance. Competition for the most votes to win a legislative seat requires political costs (Syafputri & Wardani, 2024). The more programs planned to attract voters, the greater the costs that candidates must incur. Political costs are the financing of legislative candidates in the

implementation of elections, which includes four stages: nomination, campaigning, elections, and post-elections. In the nomination stage, funds are needed for political party fees, campaign team formation, and registration. In the campaign stage, funding includes procurement of campaign materials, salaries for volunteers and campaign managers, socialization, and community activities. In the election stage, funding includes salaries for witnesses or volunteers, gifts, or cash for the community. Meanwhile, in the post-election stage, funding includes the costs of regular visits to constituencies, assistance and budget allocations for constituencies, and party contributions.

Ella Syafputri (2024) highlights that the lack of female representation can be attributed to four main factors, one of which is the very high cost of politics, which makes women reluctant to run for public office because they do not have access to the capital and networks needed to win elections. Based on research and interviews, the average political costs incurred by female legislators elected to compete in the 2024 elections range from 500 million to 1 billion rupiah. Several informants also stated that political financing or costs came purely from personal funds, not party assistance. Neldaswenti said that she did not receive any assistance from her party for financing.

However, since she has served as a member of the Sawahlunto DPRD for three terms, the capital expenditure has not been too large, even lower than that of her competitors in the same electoral district. In line with Nela Abdika Zamri, a female

legislator from the Golkar party, also said that there was no assistance at all from the party for the costs; all costs came from the legislative candidates themselves, there were no political contracts and no payments to political parties to become legislative candidates. Nela, who is competing in the election for the second time, admitted that the costs she had to pay for this period were much higher than the first. This was because, in the initial period, she was still trying and was not too optimistic about running. Moreover, in her first period, she was fully supported by the community. Therefore, there were more contributions from the community, which enabled representatives from the area. Further, Sitti Izati Azis agrees that women who run in elections must have political costs, especially for campaign materials. In terms of funding, Sitti also relies on personal funds and network support. Nurva Eva Karmila from the PKS faction also acknowledges that political costs are an important asset in elections, but money is not the only weapon to win votes. In this election, Nurva admitted to spending less on political costs than her competitors by relying on personal funds.

Based on the mapping of female legislative capital in West Sumatra, the relationship between political dynasties and the victory of female legislative candidates is very close and is considered the most important factor in victory. When a female legislative candidate has a political dynasty, she will certainly have sufficient social, symbolic, and economic capital to compete in the election. This is because female legislators who have certain political dynasty connections or relationships are attached to the political

networks, economic capital, and fame associated with the main figures of their political dynasties. As a result, political parties tend to prioritize female candidates who have political connections or dynasties to increase their electability, and it is not uncommon for political parties to waive specific requirements for these women. Female candidates who do not come from dynastic ties tend to have low bargaining power to be placed in strategic positions in each stage of the nomination process. These candidates usually do not have the same economic, social, and political access as candidates with dynastic ties. Even so, female legislators continue to strive to demonstrate their qualities and fight for the aspirations of women's groups.

2. The Concept of Gender in the Victory Strategy of Female Legislators in West Sumatra

Anne Philip categorizes women's representation in terms of not only quantity, but also quality. Women's representation should take the form of a politics of presence, which includes substantive presence, i.e. actively voicing women's ideas, thoughts, and interests to realize gender-sensitive policies and strong public control. The presence of women in the West Sumatra legislature is certainly expected to restore the role of Minang women as an important element in decision-making. Besides, the presence of women in the policy arena is expected to improve the quality of life and welfare of women in West Sumatra. Gender and women's issues are strategic areas for female legislators in portraying themselves. Based on this, gender issues have become a winning strategy for female legislative candidates ahead of the

elections, with a focus on strengthening women's bargaining position, addressing cultural and structural barriers, and optimizing women's specific issues as the main campaign material.

Female legislators often position themselves as representatives who will fight for women's groups. The issue of the lack of women in the legislature is used as a reason and an appeal to the public to vote for women in the elections. This is linked to the belief that the presence of women in policymaking circles will certainly encourage the creation of gender-friendly policies/programs. Many problems are still experienced by women, ranging from cases of violence against women and children, discrimination against women in various fields, barriers to women's health and reproductive access, and the empowerment of women, which are highly strategic topics promoted by female candidates to gain support from other women. This is not without reason, because in the 2024 elections, based on data from the West Sumatra Voter List, the number of female voters is greater than that of male voters. Out of a total of 4,088,606 voters, there are 2,011,318 male voters and 2,077,288 female voters.

According to the informants, one of the motivations for running as a female representative is to fight for women's aspirations through the planning of women's empowerment programs. Neldaswenti said that almost 100 percent of the programs planned and promoted during the election raised gender issues and concepts, as well as promoted programs involving women. Neldaswenti is the chairperson of Forkesi, a community forum that focuses on disabled people and women. Her activeness in GOW is also utilized for the implementation of women's programs, including the initiator of the

Silow movement, the Women's Quality of Life Improvement Program (PKHP) and PKKPI. Starting from the weak condition and bargaining power of women in Sawahlunto, she established the Silow School to instill motivation in women. The participants of the Silow School are ordinary women from the community and cannot be cadres. After attending Silow, women are given motivation to change their mindset about the importance of women's position, followed by the Sawahlunto Women's Quality of Life Improvement Program (PKHP), which provides education and training. At PKPPI, women are given public speaking training so that they have the courage to perform. Neldaswenti's track record makes her known as a figure who actively empowers women and has gained the trust of cadres, training members, and the women of Sawahlunto. Sitti Izati Azis, a senior female legislator from the Golkar Party, has been actively working and speaking out for the improvement of women's welfare since her election in 2009. Sitti conveyed that the programs and every activity plan are focused on women in order to empower them. More than 70 percent of the recesses, local regulation socialization, and field visits focus on issues and provide greater opportunities for women's groups. Sitti also admitted that in every election, her target voters are women. Likewise, other female legislative members use a program approach for women's groups in their winning strategies. Zaksai Kasni uses the branding "care about protecting women and children" as one of the important points in his political communication. Sri Kumala Dewi has stated from the outset that her policies and programs focus on empowering women, education, and people with disabilities, as well as improving the people-centered economy.

She has been involved in the struggle for people with disabilities since 2008.

Nurva Eva Kamila and Nela have a different view. They believe that there is no need for programs to focus on women's issues because almost all issues in society involve women. Nurva Eva Kamila rejects the notion that the world of politics is a masculine world. In fact, it is women who participate and are involved more in the election process. During every visit, the group that has more opportunities to attend is women. In addition, the aspirations generally come from mothers or women's groups for all kinds of issues, ranging from rice fields, fisheries, agriculture, and others. In line with Nurva, Nela Abdika Zamri, a young Golkar politician, said that there are no special programs or political promises specifically for women. However, Nela acknowledged that almost all activities during the election involved more women. Women's groups seem to be more enthusiastic and participate more than men, who are unable to attend because they are working. As a fellow woman, Nela found it easy to approach the women who attended. Moreover, her gender as a woman has a positive impact on the appreciation she receives. The community believes that women work more from the heart and do not just make promises.

Gender issues are often used as a political campaign strategy to build an emotional connection with female voters and position female candidates as representatives of women's interests. Women's issues are more often used as an electoral tool to secure political support, but the question remains whether these issues will translate into a commitment to a gender equality agenda or not. In West Sumatra, female legislators claim they consistently incorporate women's empowerment agendas into their work

programs in line with the committees they serve on.

However, looking at the leadership structure of the West Sumatra Regional Legislative Council (DPRD) for the 2024–2029 term, all positions are held by men. Women have not yet occupied many strategic positions, such as Chairperson of the DPRD or leadership roles within the council's standing committees; this limits their bargaining power or ability to influence policy. This study is not limited to the number of women who have successfully entered the legislative body, but also examines women's ability to build political standing amidst patriarchal dominance. This phenomenon highlights a gap between the "politics of presence" and the "politics of ideas."

3. Women's Political Opportunities in a Matrilineal Society

It has become a common phenomenon, both at the central and regional levels, that the under-representation of women in the legislature is due to the difficulty women face in entering the political arena. This limited access stems from the marginalization of women's potential in the public sphere. Deep-rooted patriarchal stigma has led to a lack of confidence in women's ability to manage public issues. The prevalence of patriarchal culture in society still positions women as second-class citizens who are not worthy of managing issues beyond private matters (bed, well, and kitchen). This stigma is widespread and permeates various dimensions, from institutions to public perception, as seen in the lack of opportunities and support from political parties and the public's doubts about being led and represented by women.

West Sumatra is known as a matrilineal region that places women at the center. Matrilineal culture can provide

more space and trust, enabling women to participate in the policy-making sphere. Matrilineal culture is often characterized by nuances of emancipation and feminist teachings. In matrilineal customs, the term *bundo kanduang* refers to a person considered important as a manager of ancestral property, a moral and cultural educator, a conflict mediator, a symbol of exemplary behavior and harmony, and a transmitter of noble values from generation to generation. In the context of political dynamics in traditional communities, especially in family deliberations, the voice of the *bundo kanduang* determines the desired outcome (Hakimy, 2001).

In Minangkabau society, men and women are equal; neither is superior or inferior. Each has their own role, and the two are balanced. The Minangkabau people adhere to the philosophy: “*basuku ka ibu, ba nasab ka ayah*” (ethnicity follows the mother, lineage follows the father). This demonstrates that the status and roles of men and women are equal.

Matrilineal does not mean matriarchal. Matrilineal is a customary system that traces lineage or clan descent, whereas matriarchy is a system in which the center of power or leadership lies in the hands of women. In a matrilineal system, women do not necessarily hold power; rather, it pertains to identity, land, and possibly names passed down through the mother. In a matrilineal system, women are not automatically positioned as dominant actors within the entire social and political power structure. In Minangkabau social practice, public authority, traditional leadership, religious authority, and strategic decision-making remain largely dominated by men through the roles of *mamak*, *datuak*, or *penghulu*.

Women in matrilineal systems were respected figures and played an important role in the continuity of a nagari. The *bundo kanduang* have five main duties, as set out in the *petatah petitih* (Devi, 2014; Hakimy, 1991), namely: (1) as '*Limpapeh rumah nan gadang*', women guide and determine the education of their successors; (2) as '*Umbun puruak pagangan kunci*', the regulator and manager of wealth, as well as the resolver of all family and community problems; (3) as '*Pusek jala kumpulan tali*', the one who determines the life of the household, both physically and spiritually; (4) as '*Sumarak dalam nagari*', that her presence is very much needed by her nagari; and (5) as '*Nan gadang basa batuah*', functioning to strengthen relationships between family members, clans and communities.

Modernization, the influence of other cultures, changes in state structures and systems, and shifts in traditional structures have significantly altered the status of Minangkabau women in both social life and the public sphere, including politics. Development progress and advances in state-guaranteed rights have fostered equal treatment between men and women. Various regulations have opened doors for women to access the highest levels of education and employment in the public sphere. More women are choosing to pursue careers and are no longer confined to the role of primary homemakers. The shift towards a centralized government system, which has eliminated the authority of the *nagari*, has gradually eroded the functions of the traditional social and cultural order. Traditional institutions are beginning to lose their functions and roles, and the influence of patriarchal culture is slowly growing within Minangkabau society.

The central position of Minangkabau women has shifted to a merely symbolic one. However, within the adat, there has been no change or weakening of women's status. Minangkabau adat will always place women as the "*limpapeh rumah nan gadang*"—that is, as an essential part of community life.

Currently, the position of Minang women has deteriorated. Their former glory in holding ancestral property is now only symbolic. The arrival of the Dutch and changes in village administration began to alter the form, function, and continuity of a number of local wisdom traits in Indonesia. The loss of the essence of the nagari also affected the institutions within it, including the *bundo kandung*. This has been increasingly influenced by the development of the times and cultural shifts. The dominance of patriarchal culture, which is increasingly taking root, has slowly begun to sideline women's participation. Minangkabau women seem to be drawn only into the private sphere. Matrilineality has become only a symbol related to kinship, while in the social, political, and economic spheres, Minangkabau women have no access.

Currently, political practice does not regard traditional authority as a significant influence within formal political structures. Today's political competition is characterised by economic capital, party networks, and political patronage. As a result, women's symbolically strong positions in traditional spheres do not always translate into power in the modern political arena. According to Bourdieu's theory of political capital, the distribution of political capital in matrilineal societies remains unequal. Women may possess symbolic legitimacy within the culture, but they do not necessarily have sufficient social, economic, and political capital to

compete independently in electoral contests.

Despite an increase in the number of women elected to the West Sumatra legislature in 2045, this still cannot be separated from the influence of male domination. The majority of elected female legislators often ride on the coattails of male figures. Female legislators who succeed in getting elected mostly have connections as wives, children, or siblings of political dynasties. Their victories are achieved through capital obtained from these connections, not their own capabilities. It is not about who the woman is, but rather whose woman she is. Although it cannot be denied, there are also female legislators who are known for their consistency and activity in public affairs and organizations. They are active in voicing their opinions and carrying out practical political activities in the community. Meanwhile, women who do not come from certain political connections or dynasties rarely have an easy ride, because they do not have the freedom of access to economic, social, and political resources. And usually, women in this group are rarely noticed or trusted by political parties.

The factors behind the low number of women elected in West Sumatra include weak implementation of regulations, insufficient socialization of women, gender bias among policymakers, lack of commitment from political parties to promote women, and limited financial resources (Ridha et al., 2023). The barriers to Minangkabau women's representation in politics stem from two dimensions: external barriers and internal barriers. First, external barriers arise from the public environment, religious dogma, and social and cultural conditions that do not support women's presence, such as discrimination against women in the public

sphere, recruitment systems, party rules, lack of support or network relations, unsupportive environments, access to education, and availability of economic capital. This is also experienced directly by female legislators in West Sumatra. Male dominance in political parties is very strong. In fact, many women encounter conflict and obstacles when running for office. Women are often placed at the bottom of the list after men. Few women are trusted to hold strategic positions within parties. Neldaswenti said that it is difficult for women to enter leadership positions in policy-making, especially in the representative branch, due to their order on the list. Women often lose and are forced to yield to men in terms of order on the list. Women are often placed at the bottom or at the end of the list. For example, Neldaswenti was initially placed in the third position, which she strongly rejected, leading to a reaction that if she was not placed in the first position, she would decide to withdraw and not run for office. Sitti Izati experienced the same thing. Even though she had been active for a long time and had been elected several times as a legislative member, she was once placed in the third or fourth position.

The lack of commitment from political parties to promote women is also a barrier to bringing women into the political arena. Political organizations are not entirely consistent in developing quality female cadres. Political parties nominate female legislative candidates only to meet the 30% election requirement, without providing training or paying attention to their potential. As a result, female legislative candidates often appear at the end of the election registration period. This leaves little time for socialization. The lack of socialization

among women in the community means they tend to appear only during elections, so they are not well known by the community. Not only that, there is significant gender-biased behavior in political parties, such as a lack of trust in female cadres. Because they are seen only as fulfilling quotas and there is a lack of confidence in political parties, female candidates appear without any meaningful support. It is not uncommon for female candidates to have to finance their own campaigns with personal funds, which leaves them without the power to compete with male candidates. This was acknowledged by Nela, who lost to her rival in her first candidacy, although her path to the West Sumatra legislature was later reopened due to an interim replacement (PAW).

Initially, I was included in the Final Candidate List only to fill the quota, but after being registered, I had no choice but to follow the process, which required me to interact, meet, and engage directly with the community. As it turned out, I received full support from the community, especially the people of Akabiluru, who supported and trusted me to represent their region in the policy-making body. Moreover, despite the initial stigma from my family, who viewed politics negatively, thanks to the support from the community and community leaders, for the first time, Akabiluru had a member of the Regional Representative Council, so I began to enthusiastically reach out to the community during the remaining two months of the campaign. There was no support at all from the party; all the

costs came from the legislative candidate herself."

"Awal di keluarkan sebagai Daftar Calon Tetap hanya karena sebagai pelengkap kuota, namun setelah terdaftar, mau tidak mau harus mengikuti prosesnya dan mengakibatkan berinteraksi, bertemu dan berhubungan langsung dengan masyarakat, Ternyata justru mendapat dukungan penuh dari masyarakat terutama masyarakat di Akabiluru, yang mendukung dan mempercayai menjadi wakil di lembaga kebijakan dalam memperjuangkan daerah asal. Apalagi stigma awal dari keluarga memandang negatif ke dunia politik, tapi karena suport dari masyarakat, tokoh masyarakat untuk pertama kalinya bisa memiliki anggota DPRD yang berasal dari akabiluru, maka mulai semangat turun ke masyarakat di dua bulan sisa masa kampanye. Tidak ada suport sama sekali dari partai, semua biaya itu berasal dari calon legislatif sendiri"

Second, internal obstacles stemmed from within Minangkabau women themselves, particularly their desire and decision to enter the political world. Many Minangkabau women gave up their intention to enter politics because of the double burden they carried. Minangkabau women, who have long been trusted to manage the rumah gadang (traditional Minangkabau house), are subject to a belief that women are solely responsible for household affairs and children, while entering the political world would be very time-consuming and energy-intensive. This belief makes women's interest in politics low, and their fighting spirit and involvement tend to be weak.

Women in Indonesia, in general, are still shackled by ingrained cultural values. In the social system, the patriarchal cultural paradigm, a belief or ideology that men are higher in status than women, leaves women as a second-class group forced to yield to men. West Sumatra, known for its matrilineal customs, is no exception. Matrilineality and the central position of women today are limited to kinship relations. The position of *bundo kanduang*, which played an important role in life, is no longer found. According to Naim (in Emillia, 1996: 50), Minangkabau women do have some privileges, but essential political roles remain with men. Although the people of West Sumatra still uphold and take pride in their matrilineal customs, the concept of matrilineality has become merely symbolic and has lost its function. The modern matrilineal social order no longer fully implements the traditional way of life based on institutions and community leaders. The shift from extended families to nuclear families has indirectly placed the management of the family in the father's hands, with the mother managing only the household, and the *mamak* no longer playing a role in protecting women. The degradation of customs and culture has also affected West Sumatra due to globalization and capitalism, causing the role of women in the family and Minangkabau culture to begin to change. This has rendered the use of the matrilineal concept and the glory of women's position in the past incoherent and no longer contributes to the study of West Sumatran women gaining greater opportunities in the public sphere.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Women's representation in the West Sumatra legislature in 2024 has increased. The election of these female legislators was supported by various forms of capital, ranging from social capital and political capital to economic capital. The majority of female legislators elected to the West Sumatra Regional Representative Council in 2024 have political connections and are associated with well-known figures or political dynasties. Some female legislators also have extensive social capital networks due to their active involvement in organizations and political parties. Economic capital is essential for female legislators competing in elections, given the political costs; the range of political costs that female legislators must incur in the implementation of elections is between 500 million and 1 billion rupiah. Female legislators admit that their economic capital comes from their own funds, without assistance from parties. This proves that the majority of female legislators in West Sumatra come from families with sufficient economic means. Gender issues are also raised by female legislators as a winning strategy. Female legislators in West Sumatra focus their vote-winning efforts on women, so during the socialization and campaign stages, they prioritize activities involving women. Female legislators position themselves as representatives who will fight for women's aspirations in policy-making institutions.

Although representation has increased compared with the previous period, the number of women in the West Sumatra parliament remains far below the 30% quota. Various obstacles continue to prevent women from competing with men. Patriarchal culture, limited opportunities and confidence, and even factors related to

women themselves are underlying causes of the lack of female representation in West Sumatra. The uniqueness of West Sumatra as a matrilineal region, which positions women as special, does not significantly support women's entry into the public sphere. Matrilineality now appears only as a symbol of past glory; it is no longer practiced, and various problems of subordination and discrimination against women persist in West Sumatra. Women's representation remains dominated by masculine power structures and does not fully reflect the transformation of egalitarian gender relations.

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