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# Social Capital as the Key to the Female Legislative Members' Success in East Nusa Tenggara's Regional House of Representatives during the 2014 General Elections

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## Abstract

This study elaborates how several female legislative candidates succeeded in being elected during the 2014 General Elections for the 2014-2019 period, and is based on the journey of six female candidates who managed to secure a seat in East Nusa Tenggara's Regional House of Representatives. This study uses Robert Putnam's social capital theory and Claudia Derich, Andrea Fleschenberg, and Momoyo Hustebeck's moral capital theory. Qualitative in nature, the findings of this study are gathered through an in-depth interview with these women. It reveals how patriarchal culture ingrained in men (husbands and fathers), specifically those who are influential public figures, cultural figures, politicians, and local leaders were used by these six women to gain support and secure their place in the parliament. As a form of social capital, these women's close ties with male elites led, not only to their election, but also resulted in the highest number of women elected in East Nusa Tenggara's Legislative Body. Compared to the 2009 General elections, the number rose by a hundred percent.

**Keywords:** Women, Politics, Social Capital, Regional House of Representatives, East Nusa Tenggara

## 1. Introduction

The election of female legislative candidates in Indonesia's general elections signifies a breakthrough in electoral politics. Women change the nuance of policy-making and it proves to be strategic because of their different life experiences and ways of socializing. In this aspect, women provide values, experiences, and skills that are distinct from men (Budiarti, 2011). Trust, as a form of social capital, is formed by strong and direct interpersonal relationships, as well as primordialism arising from ethnic similarity (Minangkabau Tribe). In addition, female

legislative candidates are able to perform their legislative duties and this becomes the foundation of their constituents' trust. (Putri, 2018).

In several instances, women's election in the central and local bodies illustrates women's awareness of the importance of political participation. This urge is catalyzed by their concern towards issues relating to women and children. In East Nusa Tenggara, women's motivation to participate in politics is driven by issues relating to women. For example, Aleta Baun, an environmental activist and public figure in East Nusa Tenggara, was against the natural exploitation caused by marble mining companies and mobilized the locals to oppose the mining activities that were conducted in their area. As a result, the mining companies ceased their operations. The people from her region continued to support her continuously, until she was elected as a legislative member and succeeded in creating a regional environmental policy that opposed natural exploitation in East Nusa Tenggara (Jovani, 2021). Although East Nusa Tenggara is dominated by a patriarchal culture, women still receive care and support from the general public. The six women's success in politics can be attributed to trust, one of Robert Putnam's three social capital. Robert Putnam, an expert in political science, stated that social capital is inherent in social relations. It is built through a vast network comprising of: 1) trust or positive values that appreciate development and achievements; 2) social norms and obligations; 3) a social network that serves as a platform for social activities, specifically those that take on the form of voluntary association. According to Putnam, voluntary association is important in the development of social capital because it allows communication to flow effectively. It is also a place where the actors could interact and conduct transactions, which will then give birth to a reciprocal relationship (Putnam, 1993).

According to Putnam, social capital is an actor's individual asset which, in time, could change into a collective asset. Close relationships are vital in identifying social capital because it signifies trust, norms, and reciprocity. With regards to its function, social capital is an agent of change that supports individual actors or groups in achieving their purpose and fulfilling their interests.

If norms on reciprocity and cooperation are established through a network of social institutions or bodies, social capital will strengthen. Trust is closely related to cultural roots, especially in terms of morals and ethics. In East Nusa Tenggara, women's representation in the Parliament is supported by constituents who are extended families of the female legislative members. These constituents believe that female candidates could realize their needs through policies.

Claudia Derichs, Andrea Fleschenberg, and Momoyo Hustebeck's *Gendering Moral Capital: Morality as a Political Asset and Strategy of Top Female Politicians in Asia* (2006) provides an explanation on how moral capital, as a female politician's asset and strategy, could influence their election. In Asia, female politicians such as Wan Azizah from Malaysia, Aung San Suu Kyi from Burma, Park Geun-hye from South Korea, and Tanaka Makiko from Japan was raised in a political background and utilized moral capital to reach the political peak in their respective countries (Derichs, Fleschenberg, & Hustebeck, 2006).

Aside from the four women mentioned above, there are also seven female Asian leaders that utilized moral capital: Begum Khaleda Zia (wife of Ziaur Rahman) and Sheikh Hasina Wajed (daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) from Bangladesh, Aung San Suu Kyi (daughter of Aung San) from Burma, Megawati Sukarnoputri (daughter of Sukarno) from Indonesia, Wan Azizah Wan Ismail (wife of Anwar Ibrahim) from Malaysia, Benazir Bhutto (daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) from Pakistan and Corazon Aquino (wife of Benigno S. Aquino Junior) from the Philippines.

In Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi's study on four Javanese-Muslim female political leaders, she illustrated how these women used the idea of gender, piety, and sexuality in women's personal life as a political strategy (Dewi, 2017). In various cases, female politicians possess the ethics to serve because of their awareness of issues relating to gender in their areas.

These female politicians are considered to be more caring and nurturing. This concept of 'care' becomes a strategic tool that could potentially be used by female politicians to garner support (Dewi, 2019).

In addition to social capital, moral capital is also one of the key factors. This is evident in that the professions of these women are considered "good" and depicts them as a "role model." Kristien Samiyati, Kristofora Bantang, and Angela Piwung are teachers; Adriana Kossi is a minister; Yeni Veronika is an advocate and was the head of the Family Empowerment and Welfare Body (wife of a regent); and Aleta Baun is an environmental activist. In addition, the husbands and/or parents (fathers) of these six women are prominent public and political party figures, and regional leaders.

The social capital theory and moral capital theory can answer the following question: How did the six female legislative candidates utilize social capital to secure a seat in East Nusa Tenggara's Regional House of Representatives during the 2014 General Elections?

## **2. Method**

The research method used in this study is qualitative in nature and includes two categories, namely literary review and field study in the form of in-depth interviews with the relevant sources. Furthermore, secondary data is gathered through literary study that focuses on books, journals, research reports, documents, and other written sources on the relevant subjects. Literary study is needed to support the theories and concepts used in this research. The case study in this research aims to explain the social and moral capital possessed by six female legislative members of East Nusa Tenggara's Regional House of Representatives (2014-2019 period), namely Kristien Samiyati, Adriana Kossi, Kristofora Bantang, Yeni Veronika, Angela Piwung dan Aleta Baun.

## **3. Results**

The background and motivation of these six women in entering politics and participating in electoral contestation are influenced by three factors. Firstly, the individual capabilities of these women, which becomes their social capital are entering electoral politics. These individual capabilities include, among others, their good personality and public communication, as well as their leadership skills which are reflected through their respective professions as teachers, ministers, advocates, and activists. These professions directly influence their public communication towards their constituents. Furthermore, their leadership in their respective organizations also becomes a key factor in their success. Secondly, their social and humanistic values. According to Dewi (2020), with regards to women's character in policy-making, women tend to accentuate on specific issues relating to women, children, social welfare, health, and other issues that correlates with women's caring nature. Thirdly, the support of their husbands, parents (father) and people. These six women succeeded in becoming legislative members due to the support given by husbands and fathers, who are prominent and have influence in society.

During the early stages of their political career, these six women possessed individual capabilities that led them into entering politics and advocating social and humanistic values in the parliament as policymakers. Although Adriana Kossi was doubtful and anxious, the support she gained from her husband gave her the courage to convince her constituents, which mostly consist of her extended family, to vote for her. The professional background of these women contributed to earning the trust of the constituents and convinced their constituents that they are capable of fighting for the interests and needs of their constituents. Furthermore, the support they received from their loved ones (husband, father, and extended family) became the main capital and key factor that led to the success of these women in becoming legislative members.

Putnam illustrates social capital is inherent in social relations. Social capital is built through a network that comprises of three elements: first, trust or positive values that appreciate development and achievements; second, social norms and obligations; and third, a social network that serves as a platform for social activities, specifically those that take on the form of voluntary associations. The social capital possessed by these six women is accompanied by reciprocity and cooperation between a network of social institutions. This study shows that trust towards these six women stemmed from their husbands, parents (fathers), families, and friends. The trust of the

constituents either resulted from similarity in values, race, or organization. As a social capital, trust is based on the individual identity of the female candidates. For example, Kristien Samiyati is the daughter of a politician and public figure in the Regency of Southwest Sumba; Yeni Veronika, despite originating from Sumatera, were accepted by the people because she is the wife of a politician and local leader that was incumbent for two periods in the Regency of Manggarai; Angela Piwung is the daughter of a renowned medical worker and the wife of a local leader's son in the Regency of Ngada and Nagekeo; and, Aleta Baun is not only an environmental activist, but also the daughter of a cultural and public figure in the Regency of South Central Timor. The social capital of these women can be seen on the table below:

Tabel 1: Trust as a Social Capital of Six Female Members of East Nusa Tenggara's Regional House of Representatives (2014-2019 period)

No	Female Member	Social Capital
1	Kristien Samiyati	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Her father was a political</li> <li>- Her extended family resides in NTT III, her area of election</li> <li>- She is a teacher and owns a culinary business</li> </ul>
2	Adriana Kossi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Her husband is a politician</li> <li>- Her husband's extended family resides in NTT III, her area of election</li> <li>- She is a minister in GMIT</li> </ul>
3	Kristofora Bantang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Her best friend is a politician</li> <li>- Her parents' extended family resides in NTT IV, her area of election</li> <li>- She is a teacher and is active in the WKRI community</li> </ul>
4	Yeni Veronika	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Her husband is a politician</li> <li>- Her husband is a local leader</li> <li>- Her husband's extended family resides in NTT IV, her area of election</li> <li>- She is active as the head of the Family Empowerment and Welfare Body.</li> </ul>
5	Angela Piwung	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Her father is a public figure</li> <li>- Her husband and extended family resides in NTT suami dan keluarga besar di dapil NTT V</li> <li>- She was a former legislative member in East Nusa Tenggara's Regional House of Representatives (2009-2014 period)</li> <li>- She is active in the Parliament's Women's Caucus</li> </ul>
6	Aleta Baun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- She is a famous environmental activist</li> <li>- Her parents' extended family resides in NTT VIII, her area of election</li> <li>- Her supporters reside in NTT VIII, her area of election</li> <li>- Her father is a cultural and public figure</li> </ul>

*Source: An analysis of the primary data*

This study reveals that trust between these six women and their constituents was built upon the innermost circle, familial relations, and an external circle that consist of knowledge-based friendship. The introductory process between these women and their constituents is personal in nature, which leads to trust that is also personal. Furthermore, the trust build is also reciprocal in nature because of the similarity in values stemming from the same family, ethnicity, and organization. As a family members, these women have an advantage because they are able to discuss programs and issues informally, except in indigenous societies, where discussions must be conducted

through a cultural ritual that differs depending on the area. For example, as Sumbanese women, Kristien Samiyati and Adriana Kossi must engage in rituals.

The author followed Kristofora Bantang to West Manggarai Regency, where she sought her ancestor's consent during the 2019 General Elections. This ritual was conducted in a traditional house (gendang house) and consisted of two traditional rituals, which are “teing hang” (give offering to the ancestors in a traditional gendang house) and “wuat hai” (provision given by the elders). This ritual is conducted as a form of respect towards their ancestors. Chickens are used as a medium for these rituals and symbolize sincerity in fighting for and serving the people (Jovani, 2021).

Likewise, in Ngada, Angela Piwung holds an important position compared to most men. Therefore, she often participates in cultural rituals for women until late. This is also conducted as a form of respect for her ancestors. Similarly, Aleta Baun also faces a similar situation. She also holds an important position compared to men, so she participates in cultural rituals until late at night. For these women, this culture must be preserved because it is an inheritance passed down from their ancestors, and not because it guarantees them to secure a seat in the elections. The trust between these women and the people is built from intensive communication, which started when they began to divulge in social, public, and religious organizations. Hence, trust as a social capital that is possessed by these women was obtained through their identity/fame. It can be said that trust was built upon familial, tribal, social, and religious relations. Therefore, this relationship eases the political campaign they conducted in their electoral area. The people's trust towards them is rooted from the belief that these women will advocate the family's or people's aspirations, and fulfill their promise if they are elected as legislative members.

Kristien Samiyati and Adriana Kossi from NTT III focused on female workers, education, health, and child marriage. Kristofora Bantang and Yeni Veronika from NTT IV focused on infrastructure like roads, clinics, school renovations, and the supply of water and electricity. Angela Piwung from NTT V focused on the construction of health facilities, places of worship, schools, farming tools and the empowerment of weaving. Meanwhile, Aleta Baun from NTT VIII focused on issues relating to the environment and economic empowerment. These six women became the hope that will convey their constituents' aspirations (Jovani, 2021).

In addition, Putnam stated that social capital is a public good, where trust becomes an attribute of social structure ingrained in an individual. However, there is a lack of trust that occurred due the infamous track record of a legislator, where the position obtained does not bring significant impact for the constituents in the electoral area. Therefore, trust as a social capital must be preserved by building a continuous relationship and providing a positive impact to the people. Additionally, trust built by these women originated from continuous social and religious activities (Putnam, 1993).

Besides knowledge and education, organizational and work experience becomes an important capital for female legislators in policy-making. Based on the results of this research, these six women have various organizational experiences. Most are social and political activists, and was once an administrator in their respective organizations. This became an asset for them and refined their leadership and political skills. Below is an illustration of the six women's organizational experience:

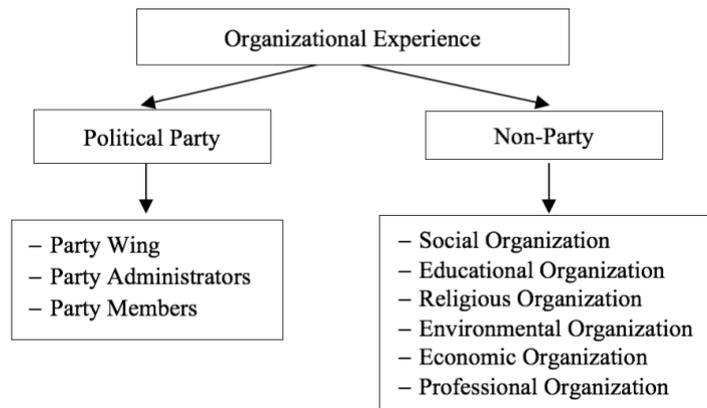


Figure 1: Organizational Experience of the Six Female Legislative Members of East Nusa Tenggara's Regional House of Representatives

Based on the above illustration, these six women have leadership experience before becoming a legislative members. Their respective organizations, such as the Child Protection Services (Lembaga Perlindungan Anak/LPA), Legal Aid Services (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum/LBH), Indonesia's Catholic Women's Body on Female (Wanita Katolik Republik Indonesia/WKRI), Evangelical Christian Women's Group in Timor (Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor/GMIT), Taim Hine Foundation (an environmental foundation), non-govermental organizations (Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat/LSM), Family Empowerment and Welfare Body (Pemberdayaan dan Kesejahteraan Keluarga/PKK), Indonesia's National Student Movement (Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasional Indonesia/GMNI), Indonesia's Christian Student Movement (Gerakan Mahasiswa Kristen Indonesia/GMKI), and the Indonesian Businesswomen Association (Ikatan Wanita Pengusaha Indonesia/IWAPI).

After explaining the social capital owned by these women as female legislative candidates, we will discuss the moral capital of these women based on Derichs, Fleschenberg and Hustebeck's perspective. The election of these women was supported by moral capital because of their professions as teachers, ministers, advocates, and activists, where these profession are considered "good" and "close" to society (Derichs, Fleschenberg & Hustenbeck, 2006). This can be seen from the campaign conducted by these women, where they portray themselves as a mother that offers comfort and honesty.

These women took advantage of these assets to build a close relationship with the people. Even after their election as legislative members, these women returned to their electoral area, helped, and listened to the aspirations of the people. In addition, these women used the "acting for" representation (Pitkin, 1967) because of the strong individual capital and support from a patriarchal culture resulting from their closed ones (their husbands and fathers) who are also politicians, public and cultural figures, and local leaders. The most pivotal aspect is their acceptance of the trust given by their constituents.

#### 4. Conclusion

The success of these six women in the 2014 general elections stems from the constituents' trust towards them, a social capital that was born from men (husbands and fathers). This trust is a result of similarity in values, tribe, and organization. The people's belief in the men (husbands and fathers) who are public and cultural figures, politicians, and local leaders influenced the election of the six women.

In addition to social capital, moral capital, which is evident in their professions as teachers, ministers, advocates, and activists, also becomes a key factor to their success. Furthermore, the individual capital of these women, which took on the form of a good personality, way of communication, and leadership in their respective organizations is also a factor that contributed to their success. With regards to the social and moral capital theory, the contribution

of this research lies within the trust resulting from the prominent figures of men (husbands and fathers) that hold influence over the people. The election of the women as legislative members is bolstered by patriarchy, and is contrary to the general portrait and reality of East Nusa Tenggara.

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