

Challenges and Political Communication Strategies to Win Elections: Ethnographic Studies on Women DPD RI Members

Sila Nirmala¹, Deddy Mulyana², Dadang Rahmat Hidayat³, Dadang Sugiana⁴

Abstract

Women's political participation faces various societal challenges, such as patriarchal culture and the politicians' internal challenges. Even though there is a minimum quota of 30% women's representation, many regions cannot meet this quota. The members of Indonesian senates (after this referred to as DPD RI) from South Sumatra Province are an exception. All four members are women. Therefore, there is an opportunity to design women's political communication to win elections from the examples provided by DPD RI South Sumatra Province members. This research aims to understand the challenges women politicians face, design women's political communication strategies to win elections and formulate women's political communication models in winning the election for DPD RI members. The research method was conducted through interviews with women DPD RI members who won elections in South Sumatra Province, Indonesia. Researchers investigated the challenges faced by these winners and how they were able to overcome them. The challenges found included physical challenges, external challenges from the community, and internal challenges from DPD RI members. At the same time, the strategies used were the target, symbol, communication, and media strategies. This research identifies many political communication strategies that broaden the theoretical framework. Included in the strategies proposed are symbolic interaction-based communication and stereotype-based strategies. Both types of planning increase political confidence and voting decisions if adequately implemented, accompanied by steps to overcome the obstacles that impede women's political participation.

Keywords: *Women's Politics, Democracy, Political Communication, Strategic Stereotypes, Symbolic Interactionism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The gap in political empowerment is the most significant gender gap, far more extensive than the economic, educational and health gaps. The global gender gap in 2021 is still 22% lower than in 2020, which was 2.4 percentage points higher (WEF, 2021). The condition in Indonesia is even worse. The number of female ministers in Indonesia has fallen from 23.5% in 2019 to only 17.1% in 2021. The political Gender Gap Index for Indonesia is only 18%, which is lower than the global average (WEF, 2021). Out of 156 countries, Indonesia is ranked 92nd in political equality.

Various institutional forms allow women's participation in politics (e.g. executive institutions, judiciary, parliaments, and regional representative councils). The attention of

¹ Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, sila20001@mail.unpad.ac.id

² Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, deddy.mulyana@unpad.ac.id

³ Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, dadang.rahmat@unpad.ac.id

⁴ Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, dadang.sugiana@unpad.ac.id

this research is the institution of the Regional Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia (DPD RI). DPD RI is an institution representing regional (provincial) interests in formulating policies at the national level. In Indonesia, the DPD RI can submit draft laws on its initiative and provide input on draft laws drafted by the House of Representatives (from now on referred to as DPR RI) and the Government (Busroni, 2021). The power of the DPD RI reflects a bicameral system, namely a legislative system managed by two institutions that check and balance each other (checks and balances) (Busroni, 2021).

DPD RI members are individuals, not party representatives like DPR RI members. This freedom from political parties is essential so that DPD RI members can care about the problems, dynamics, and interests of the regions they represent (Tinambunan & Prasetyo, 2019). One of the roles of legislation produced by DPD RI at this time is Law no. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, where 60% of the contents of the law originate from input from the DPD RI (DPD RI, 2022).

The last general election currently written is the 2019 general election. In this general election, the proportion of women is the highest of the three previous general elections. The 2019 general election produced 31% of DPD RI women, higher than in 2014 (20%), 2009 (26%), and 2004 (24%) (DPD RI, 2019).

The 2019 general election signifies that women politicians are increasingly gaining a place in politics and people's choices. This percentage is the fruit of the struggle carried out by female politicians since the minimum quota of 30% for women was enacted in Law No. 22 of 2007 concerning General Elections. For the first time, female DPD RI members exceeded this minimum limit. This 31% percentage exceeds the DPR RI, which in the 2019-2024 period only had a 21% representation of women. The strategy used by female DPD RI members can serve as an example for women candidates for DPD RI and DPR RI women to win general elections. This effort includes how these female politicians face the various challenges that exist through appropriate political communication strategies.

It is crucial to examine the challenges and strategies of female DPD RI members who win the 2019 general election because women's representation has not yet reached the target at the national level, such as the DPR RI and the regional level (Local Representative Council). There are still 22 provinces in Indonesia with less than 30% DPD RI members. Seven of them were not represented by women at all. Progress at the national level has also been inconsistent because the percentage of representation still fluctuates from period to period. So, it is crucial to identify the obstacles and how they can be overcome to increase women's representation in parliament.

So far, research in the Indonesian context has been limited to the DPR RI, which is supported by political parties or small contexts that do not require extensive resources and tend to know each other, such as villages and Islamic boarding schools. There has been no research directed at the political communication of DPD RI members whom parties do not formally support, so they have to fend for themselves with enormous resources from people who do not know the candidates.

This study uses the theory of symbolic interaction. This theory explains how the social environment plays a role in shaping individual communication strategies. The symbolic interaction theory asserts that there is a symbolic meaning in the communication process that occurs between female politicians and their constituents. Meanwhile, the theory of strategic stereotypes states that victory in elections rests partly on how female candidates control stereotypes about themselves. The current research supports this theory because some stereotypes must be managed strategically by women who take on the role of politicians.

In line with this, this study aims to understand the challenges women politicians face, design women's political communication strategies to win elections and formulate women's political communication models in winning the election for DPD RI members.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of Previous Research

The previous research literature on women's political communication uses various approaches. However, it is still limited to the context of the DPR or areas such as villages and Islamic boarding schools. Omotoso (2020) studies four academics involved in Nigeria's politics. This researcher found that the political communication strategies used varied. The strategies include strategic lobbying, logical argumentation, gentle persuasion, direct approach, and confrontational methods. Even so, the four showed a visual communication style with populist clothing patterns, sincerity, simplicity, and friendship.

A study by Charles et al. (2020) examined how women used social media in Kerala and Tamil Nadu to win elections. The research uncovered several social media tactics such as name and profile picture, content creation and sharing, different campaign tactics for colleagues and the general public, and the concept of tactical silence, which is knowing when to be silent and disappear from the public.

McGregor (2018) studied the political communication strategies of male and female incumbent candidates using social media on a target sample of one thousand adults in the United States. McGregor (2018) found that female candidates benefited more from a personalization strategy, namely, addressing community comments directly personally. This action increased public support for women candidates but was limited to whether or not the candidate belonging to the same party as members of the public.

Renner and Masch's study (2019) addresses gender stereotypes in German politics by analyzing 66 television broadcasts showing female and male politicians. They found that female politicians showed more emotion than male politicians, and they showed positive emotions more often than male politicians.

Bauer and Carpinella (2018) studied the visual strategies female and male candidates exhibit in their political campaigns. They found that male visual images not in line with male gender stereotypes harm female candidates who display these visuals. This negative impact is directed at the candidate's competence in the problem and electability.

Van der Pas and Aaldering's study (2020) studies gender differences in political communication using meta-analysis. The two researchers collected 90 previous studies involving 25 thousands of politicians and 750 thousand media coverage. They revealed that female candidates receive more attention on their appearance and personal life and are more likely to be seen as unfit to be candidates than men.

Coronel et al.'s study (2021) refers to how society evaluates female and male candidates, whether the focus is on faces (visual) or data (textual). They found that members of the public with high political knowledge focused more on aspects of candidate data than faces. Meanwhile, members of the public who lack political knowledge do not prioritize one piece of information over another.

In the Indonesian context, much research on gender and political communication has also been carried out. Mukarom's research (2022) studied political communication strategies in the West Java Local Representative Council and found that women's political communication used gender mainstreaming strategies. The strategies also include encouraging affirmative action to have a minimum of 30% women's representation and providing political education to women's institutions and the general public. Meanwhile,

Mardhiah et al. (2019) studied the political communication of Aceh Local Representative Council members. They revealed challenges such as stereotypes of women in politics, patriarchal culture, weak women's political communication competence, women's awareness to appear in public, private and public time management, religious interpretation, and the commitment of political parties in supporting women candidates. At a smaller level, Sari et al. (2021) studied women's informal political communication at the Baliuk Village BPD, Barito Kuala. They found that women could communicate by dominating political issues in the village, informal channels, and campaigns to elect members of the BPD. Women's activism can informally beat male candidates who are fighting formally. Ainiyah's research (2018) in the context of Islamic boarding schools also shows female students' ability in politics by minimizing conflict and focusing on strategic political issues that male students less touch.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interaction is a sociological framework that explains how the practices and attitudes of a group relate to a broader sociocultural context (Castro-Vázquez, 2015). Symbolic interactionism sees that verbal interaction between humans in their group constructs reality and creates meaning in the world (Indriani & Mulyana, 2021). This interaction is shaped by context, as a group of structural conditions surrounding humans (Storie & Marschlich, 2022).

Interaction in the perspective of symbolic interactionism emphasizes the use of symbols and metaphors. These symbols and metaphors represent gestures, language, signs and facial expressions. Through symbolic interaction, symbols develop stable meanings, but these meanings are tied to individuals and contexts (Kariryaa et al., 2022). In Indonesia, including in women's political communication, symbols are often communicated and used as a source of information as well as providing entertainment to increase voter involvement which, in turn, is expected to be able to make electoral decisions (Susila et al., 2020). This research examines how female politicians use symbols to gain electability and votes in elections as members of the DPD RI.

Strategic Stereotype Theory

Political communication literature generally uses the strategic stereotype theory from Fridkin and Kenney (2014) to analyze the campaign effectiveness of women politicians. So far, only strategic stereotype theory has become unique in women's political communication.

Strategic stereotype theory emphasizes that candidates will emphasize certain stereotypes in their presentation if they believe doing so will increase their electability (Jungblut & Haim, 2021). Stereotypes say that women are the emotional, warm, and happy gender, so female candidates will strategically utilize this gender stereotype to win contests. Even so, the media used by female candidates is the most profitable. If candidates use television or other media that allows them to be compared with men, women tend to lose because men are also stereotyped as reliable leaders. They will choose media that can increase their electability using gender stereotypes, for example, social media sites. On social media sites, women can highlight their stereotypes more without having to compete directly with male candidates. They can, for example, show a portrait that reflects their definitive version using happy facial expressions without being framed by biased media. Social media instead of television is a strategic choice to win the election.

Strategic stereotype theory is a gender theory from the point of view of the socio-psychological tradition. Most gender theories depart from critical traditions, especially feminism, which view that women's gender is under oppression and must fight for its existence in a world dominated by men. Strategic stereotype theory assumes that gender stereotypes are a social fact, and women must psychologically design strategies to respond to these social facts so that political communication is gender conscious. This

assumption differs from feminist/critical theory, which assumes gender stereotypes as political facts. This assumption makes feminism enter into the view that women's political communication must break stereotypes, meaning political communication is gender 'blind'.

3. METHODS

This empirical research was carried out in the setting of the election for DPD RI members who were part of the 2019 General Election in Indonesia. General elections in Indonesia are held every five years to elect a president-vice president, National/Local Representative Council members, and DPD RI members. DPD RI members are elected for each province to represent the province in the central government. DPD RI members are not members of political parties, unlike members of the National/Local Representative Council.

The case in this study is the election of DPD RI members in South Sumatra Province. This province is the only one out of 34 provinces in Indonesia where in the 2019 elections, the four elected DPD RI members were women. They managed to win the contest even though female participants in the election were only 42% of a total of 33 candidates (KPU, 2021), so the chance of selecting four women at random is only 2%. In addition, there has been a consistent progression in the proportion of women in various elections, starting from one person in 2004, two persons in 2009, three persons in 2014, and four persons in 2019. No province in Indonesia has shown a positive trend in terms of consistency in the last four general elections regarding the proportion of female members.

The role of the researchers in this study was to retrospectively analyze the challenges and political communication strategies of female DPD RI members based on experiences at the 2019 general elections. For this reason, the researchers conducted interviews with two groups of informants. First, the researcher spent time with the four DPD RI members as general staff from the DPD RI South Sumatra Province. The researcher interviewed the DPD RI members regarding their experience participating in the 2019 election. Second, the researcher interviewed five people from various backgrounds about the four candidates' campaigns.

The research subjects consisted of four elected DPD RI members, three members of the success team (male), one religious figure (male), and one community leader (male). The purpose of this interview is to look at women's political communication from various perspectives, both from winners (DPD RI members), executors (success team), winners in different spheres (Local Representative Council presiding officers and former DPR RI members), as well as observers (religious and community leaders). The research design is ethnographic, in which researchers build direct relationships with informants, are in their work environment, observe their practices, interact with them, participate in their daily activities, and try to learn the meaning of their actions (Silvast et al., 2020). This ethnographic research involved working visits of DPD RI members in Jakarta and South Sumatra.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are based on the perceptions of members of the DPD RI as well as the victorious team and community leaders regarding the challenges and strategies of women's political communication from the perspective of symbolic interactionism and strategic stereotype theory. The data collection results show challenges in the form of the quantity of female DPD RI members in parliament, patriarchal culture, weak economic resources, money politics, geographical conditions, public knowledge about the functions of the DPD RI, work-family time management, and self-confidence. Under the shadow of

these challenges, women candidates for DPD RI carry out political communication through symbolism, especially visuals, using face-to-face and social media facilities, approaching families, the community around the family, and related party networks, with the main target being female constituents. Candidates also plan for their constituent segments, while in communicating, candidates minimize promises and use regional languages. This strategy can be well developed through planning. Well-executed planning will overcome the inhibiting factors from the physical, internal and external aspects. Execution will lead to constituents' political confidence in candidates, victory in elections, and increased involvement of women in politics.

Challenges in Political Communication

The challenges in political communication identified in this study include geographical conditions, patriarchal culture, money politics, political knowledge, self-confidence, the proportion of women, and work-family conflict.

Geographical Conditions

Long-distance constituents imply increased travel distance, which decreases the time available for campaign activities (Willumsen, 2019). This geographical condition refers to the extent of the province of South Sumatra and the constituent locations, which are separated, and some are difficult to reach.

Then also another obstacle is geographical conditions. Geographical conditions, the area of South Sumatra is big. Furthermore, the population is 5 million. This situation means that as many as 5 million voters have to come. That is also a hindrance. (Eva's success team, 2022)

Even though information and communication technology is said to have removed geographical constraints in exchanging campaign information, constituencies in difficult geographical areas also have low access to information and communication technology. So, until now, geographical constraints are still a challenge in political communication, especially in areas with large areas such as the province of South Sumatra.

Patriarchal Culture

The people of South Sumatra themselves are generally patriarchal, but there is the Semende tribe which is classified as matriarchal (Manggiasih, 2015). The dialectic between matriarchy, patriarchy and egalitarianism is a three-way dialectic. Matriarchy can develop into patriarchy like in Minangkabau society. It does not have to be egalitarian. From a patriarchal or matriarchal perspective, women can carry out their political functions as a gift from God Almighty.

Women with all their privileges as a gift from Allah SWT must always prioritize womanhood's character and essential characteristics in carrying out political functions. (Public figure)

One of the informants stated that women's advantage over men relates to their ability to master the problem's details. These problems are nurturing issues, as the patriarchal culture attributes to women, such as education, child issues, and health. Mastery of these matters helps women communicate and represent society's aspirations, especially women.

The woman can be readily accepted because she has more control over complex issues. So household issues, fundamental food issues, children issues, education. So that when people are invited to tell stories according to the context of the problem, they are more comfortable and believe that women can represent their aspirations. (Eva's success team, 2022)

Many sources mentioned patriarchal culture as an obstacle to women's political communication, which is also in line with previous research in Indonesia (Mardhiah et al., 2019; Mukarom, 2022; Sari et al., 2021). Women are considered not too fit to be a

leader. The belief contradicts the egalitarian cultural factors widely developing in developing countries today. A better way to see this conflict is that egalitarian culture is a modern culture while patriarchy is a traditional culture in society (Yu, 2021). The electorate is experiencing a change from a patriarchal culture to an egalitarian culture. When the patriarchal culture is still strong, it becomes an obstacle for female candidates.

Meanwhile, female candidates are more readily accepted in locations where an egalitarian culture has developed. Female candidates need to fight against the stereotype that women are not supposed to be leaders and be active in the public sphere. This stereotype will disappear as patriarchal culture shifts to a more egalitarian culture and even shifts towards matriarchy. However, even in a society that still tends to be patriarchal, the characteristics of "feminism" can be used strategically to support constituent choices in current conditions of high masculinity and tend to be patriarchal.

Vote buying

The public's perception of vote buying hinders political communication because people expect that they will receive immediate rewards for their decision to elect someone. People expect to get money even before candidates campaign for them.

The people's paradigm still thinks the presidential and DPR elections are only money politics. That is the obstacle. So the pragmatism in society, which I think is an obstacle in the communication process, is explained to the public. (Eva's success team, 2022)

Vote buying is a situation that has become a problem in the general election process in Indonesia. Some people can be bought with money as a motivation to vote (Školník, 2022). Research shows that most people view vote buying as unethical, and more men engage in buying than women (Yoon, 2020). The situation means that vote buying is more or less not a severe obstacle for female candidates because society does not expect female candidates to buy votes. It is different if male candidates run the campaign. However, this is still seen as an obstacle to the campaign.

Community Political Knowledge

The next challenge is public knowledge about the function of the DPD RI. Candidates need to explain in advance the duties and responsibilities of DPD RI members before they can confirm that they are the ones who must be elected to become DPD RI members. According to the ELM (Elaboration Likelihood Model) model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), knowledge can encourage people to choose through the central path, namely logical, rational considerations based on the content of the message, rather than through the peripheral path, namely non-rational considerations such as appearance and colour. Central considerations have a longer retention value than peripheral considerations. However, there is evidence that peripheral routes are the main routes used in elections in Indonesia (Slamet et al., 2020).

Then the next obstacle is that not many people know about the duties and functions of the DPD RI. People still equate the DPD RI election with the DPR election. (Eva's success team, 2022)

The people's insufficient political knowledge has transformed into a demand for DPD RI members to educate the public during their campaigns. Efforts to increase people's political knowledge through this campaign are crucial to building a civil society and actively conducting audits of political performance to achieve a genuinely democratic society.

Politician Confidence

The personal issue that was most frequently disclosed by the sources was self-confidence. Confidence is a subjective feeling that a person can do something as expected of self or others around them. It is derived from an individual's social interaction (Mulyana, 2018).

Women politicians must be confident and fight stereotypes that women should not become leaders.

They must be confident and fight stereotypes that women should not be leaders and active in the public sphere. (Jialyka's success team, 2022)

The DPD member informant stated that she felt she was still young and inexperienced, so she was awkward with her seniors in DPD RI, but luckily, these seniors were very nurturing. She overcame this by learning to be more confident when speaking with stakeholder groups, such as farmers, in formal and informal meetings. So, in this case, age and experience are determinants for the confidence of female DPD members.

The difficulties I faced when I was initially selected were because of my relatively young age and inexperience; I was a little awkward getting along with seniors. There are many national figures in DPD RI. However, seniors and prominent figures are very nurturing. They are very welcoming to the junior members. Then I encountered many new things in Committee II DPD RI, such as agriculture. Often I study before the meeting. This process has inspired me to meet and chat with farmer groups. Indeed, I admit that the lack of young people is a lack of experience. Nevertheless, all can be pursued with the willingness and humble attitude to continue learning. (Mrs. Amaliah, 2022)

Confidence is critical in communicating with the constituent community. Social role theory asserts that women will experience greater self-confidence if their behaviour is in harmony with communal ideals in society. Women identify these public demands as desired by themselves and try to fulfil them (Schneider & Bos, 2019). For that, there needs to be support for women to be able to meet these demands:

There is a lack of support for women to participate in politics, so women lack the confidence to take a role in politics. (Religious figure, 2022)

Self-confidence can also be seen when candidates compete in elections with a lack of confidence in competing with men. Studies show that the more women are elected, the higher the confidence of other women to participate in general elections. The election of the female candidate encouraged other women to follow in her footsteps and disrupted conventions regarding the role of women in politics. There are psychological barriers to women's participation when few women are elected.

Psychological barriers, namely low self-confidence in competing with men in elections. (Mrs. Amaliah's success team, 2022)

Despite the challenges above, the DPD members who became informants in this study became the winners, indicating that their strategies effectively overcame these challenges.

The proportion of Women Politicians in Parliament

The quantity factor of women in parliament departs from critical mass theory, which states that there is a decisive proportion where women can only actively address women's issues in parliament. Under this critical proportion, women cannot put forward agendas dealing with women because men are too dominant in parliament. Previous research shows this critical mass is 15-50% (Funk et al., 2022). Indeed, this theory has been criticized by more recent findings that question the existence of such a critical mass. Bratton's study (2005) shows that in a low proportion, even when there is only one woman in parliament, women's issues can still be raised by that woman. The phenomenon is possible because men consider women's voices to provide a unique perspective and must be heard, and the fewer women, the more focused men's efforts to listen to input from them. So, in essence, there is no critical mass regarding women's representation in parliament. Instead, there are critical actors and critical actions. The emphasis on this critical mass can be seen in the following quote:

Women are not the dominant political actor in national politics in various countries. This situation is evidenced by the fact that there are more male politicians than women, namely, only around 25% of the total number of politicians sitting in parliament. This number reflects that women's representation is still insufficient to fight for and raise women's issues, so efforts are needed to increase this representation. (Ms. Amaliah's success team, 2022)

However, the critical mass theory has become the academic foundation for many governments to provide some minimum limit on the number or proportion of women in parliament so that women's votes are still represented. Even from the perspective of opponents of critical mass theory, this regulation is good because it guarantees that women are still present (not zero) in parliament. It is just that, for those who reject the critical mass theory, the number of women can only be one person. In contrast, for supporters of the critical mass theory, the number of women must be at least 15% of the total members of parliament.

Work-Family Conflict

Time management is how a candidate can manage his time effectively in dealing with various conflicting tasks, in the sense that completing one task can only be done if, at the same time, he is not doing other tasks. Examples of tasks that need to be managed are working as DPD members with family roles such as children and husbands. Women must communicate with related parties to manage their time well through collaboration. For example, women can work, and husbands are required to take care of household chores and child-rearing, as observed in women working in key positions in large companies.

Must divide time between family and work. (Jialyka's success team, 2022)

The quote above indicates a work-family conflict because the two activities, campaigning and housekeeping, cannot be carried out simultaneously. No enough freedom in both situations gives room for creativity and innovation (Melano et al., 2019). Conflicts require a strong mentality so that distractions from conflicts do not interfere with the performance of each activity. The ability to control oneself incredibly emotionally is essential for female DPD members in dealing with work-family conflict. Support from the family is also needed to maintain performance in a conflict situation like this.

In this research, researchers try to understand the mechanism behind the victory of four women as DPD RI members who represent a province in Indonesia. The first aim of this research is to examine the challenges female candidates face in winning the election for DPD RI members. This study identified geographical conditions, public perceptions of money politics, patriarchal culture, knowledge of the functions of the DPD RI, quantity in parliament, time management, and low self-esteem as factors inhibiting women's participation. Geographical conditions can be viewed as separate factors, namely physical factors. Meanwhile, other challenges can be seen as internal and external challenges. External factors include factors originating from the community environment, such as people's perceptions of elections and money politics, patriarchal culture, and public knowledge about the function of the DPD RI. Those belonging to the internal factors of the DPD RI members appear in the form of the number of women in parliament, time management, and self-confidence. Previous research commonly found a lack of constituent knowledge, the number of women in parliament, time management, and self-esteem (Funk et al., 2022; Schneider & Bos, 2019).

Political Communication Strategy

Political communication strategies for female candidates are well planned, showing that politicians can plan empathetic communication based on symbolic interaction to gain public support. This plan, however, does not imply a stereotyped strategy, at least on a formal level. The following quote, for example, does not reveal strategies related to gender:

First, prepare administration because it is the most extended requirement. If you meet the requirements, do the campaign. What is the campaign like? First, map the selector. So mapping starts with ethnicity, profession, and community. Then the area distribution. Then map to voter participation. In simple terms, we are mapping out what the public wants. In that mapping, we do research, and surveys about public expectations and societal problems, so that is what we package from public expectations. In simple language, what does the market want? (Eva's success team, 2022)

The planning is made carefully using scientific as well as practical basis. The main components of this plan are surveys and observations, followed by mapping and target selection:

Political strategies/campaigns for legislative candidates are carried out based on survey results and observations of academics and practitioners in the political field. So that different campaigns can be mapped as to what is appropriate and effective and which areas have the potential to become the basis for candidates. (Jialyka's success team, 2022)

Even though DPD RI candidates are formally not supported by political parties, political party networks can be used if the candidate has a relationship with a member of that political party, such as a husband. Two symbols are essential for introducing candidates to the public in the following quote: the Democratic Party and the Regional Secretary. These two symbols have relatively uniform and positive meanings in the eyes of society:

Approach to family and community. They were using relations or networks from the Democratic Party and people close to the family. Why is this done? Many voters do not know what the DPD RI is and do not know whom to vote for. His father, Mrs Amaliah, used to serve as Regional Secretary of Ogan Ilir Regency. With this, of course, the people in the area know their families. (Mrs. Amaliah's success team, 2022)

Another symbolism raised, of course, is the female gender. Studies show that women sometimes highlight their female aspects and gender issues in front of voters, thus getting votes from women voters (Evans et al., 2022). Likewise, women tend to be more supportive of female candidates than men of female candidates (Carson et al., 2019). Even so, the same gender is not the only determining factor. Studies show that uncertainty about the leadership skills of female candidates and problem positions can prevent most women from voting for female candidates (Cargile & Pringle, 2019).

On average, most mothers, yes. So women support women. So it is more like that. That is also why the South Sumatra DPD RI members are all women because they can hook women. (Mrs. Jialyka, 2022)

Symbolism is still significant for society, especially visual symbolism. However, studies show that visually accentuated feminine characteristics do not correlate with electoral success, unlike masculine characteristics (Chen et al., 2020). The female candidates must highlight masculine aspects of leadership in their visuals, not feminine characteristics. There is a "double bond" for female candidates to demonstrate masculine competence as well as feminine warmth. To overcome this, many female candidates show a feminine character visually but textually masculine (Carpinella & Bauer, 2021). This masculine textual character, for example, is shown in the form of vision and mission.

There are several things that I do, first, through the visuals of the photos that will be used as billboards for media campaigns. I chose an exciting photo because politicians are the same as salespeople. Because it is essential to pack yourself in such a way as to be attractive. So that people believe in us. There are various references people. Some people like the content. Some like the wrapper alone. We must not forget how to make people like it. Nevertheless, of course, do not forget our vision and mission. (Mrs. Amaliah, 2022)

The success team of one of the candidates saw that feminine appeal (beauty) from a photo was an essential element in success in attracting public attention. Although research shows that female candidates' use of feminine visuals does not increase their success in being elected, this is the only option that can be made. The use of masculine visuals by female candidates will harm these candidates (Mattan & Small, 2021) .

In addition to using visualization, namely by using exciting photos, it is proven that the photo of Mrs. Amaliah is a fascinating photo of one of the legislative candidates. With her beauty, society's visualization is fixed. (Mrs. Amaliah's success team, 2022)

Planning to represent the candidate symbolically according to the informant includes photo designs, colors and jargon. How the candidate poses, what color the background and theme are, and what jargon he sticks to has been carefully planned out:

Starting from photo design, choosing colors, jargon (Mrs. Eva's success team, 2022)

Candidates are encouraged to interact symbolically with the community according to the community's sociocultural background. For example, the issues are agricultural when the candidate is among the farmers.

Then, we directed Mrs Eva to be more communicative, placing her societal position according to people's tastes. When during farmers stories about farmers, when it comes to education issues, stories about education. (Eva's success team, 2022)

The ability to speak according to the context shows that female candidates take advantage of the stereotype of women as creatures that adapt to the environment, not forcing themselves to stand out. In addition to the language that suits their ethnicities, the candidate also uses the language that suits the area where he is campaigning. The strategy suit with the intercultural communication strategy (Mulyana, 2012).

When I campaigned in an area I used the local language visited (Mrs. Eva, 2022)

On the other hand, candidates do not use political language that makes too many promises. These stereotypes are considered unfavorable for his victory in society:

I do not use political language that makes too many promises. (Mrs Eva, 2022)

Meanwhile, socializing on social media is a beneficial feminine characteristic and needs to be used to win the competition (Charles et al., 2020; McGregor, 2018) . Socialization on social media is carried out, for example via Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram:

Second, I actively socialize on social media. Moreover, South Sumatra is quite large with a large population. Campaigning through social media is the most effective way. (Mrs. Amaliah, 2022)

Studies on the use of social media by politicians reveal that politicians use social media not to interact with voters, but to fight or balance existing power structures (Cardo, 2021) . Studies can conclude this by looking at the high level of candidate social media activity during the campaign period, while during the non-campaign period, social media activity decreases, even though that is when the policy process takes place as part of the process of fighting for women's rights that need support. From society. In this study, informants said that they carried out campaigns through social media, complemented by approaches to families and communities:

Campaigns through social media are also approaches to families and communities (Mrs. Amaliah's success team, 2022)

Ms. Arniza Nilawati, the only candidate with no association with a political party, uses a strategic resignation strategy, namely resigning from her position as a symbol that she is committed to going into politics. This strategic resignation has implications for withdrawing support and commitment from institutions:

Automatically, I started moving to convey, my first note was to say goodbye and if they allowed me to become a DPD member, I asked them to support me. Otherwise, leave me. It was my first time campaigning myself. Apart from saying goodbye to social activities, I also campaigned for what I would do after becoming a regional representative from the Province of South Sumatra. (Arniza, 2022)

The interviews above reveal that the candidates overcame physical, internal and external obstacles with a planning strategy, including the campaign targets, how symbolism is used, how political communication is carried out, and what media are used in the campaign. In line with these observations, it can be concluded that female DPD candidates running campaigns follow these two forms of sequential theoretical planning: symbolic interaction first, followed by a stereotype strategy where stereotypes of women become the symbolic meaning to be campaigned for.

Furthermore, each DPD RI member took a different path in executing his plan. Mrs Amaliah carried out a symbolic campaign with intense visualization and communication through social media. She is supported by political, social, and economic capital and chooses the correct issues. Mrs Arniza resigned strategically, with campaign efforts supported by specific segments of society, her family and academics. Mrs Eva tends to focus more on face-to-face communication with minimal promises and using regional languages, supported by a synchronous relationship with her husband, who is also campaigning as a candidate for DPR RI. Ms Jialyka focuses on campaigning for mothers supported by political relations with the older generation and the spirit of change from the younger generation.

The four symbolically follow the basic campaign pattern (visualization, resignation, local language, and mothers) and are supported by networks (political and social). The rest is the difference in which focus they carry out the campaign, whether it is the general public without exception through posters, special groups through resignation, rural groups using local languages, or women's groups using the symbolism of themselves who are young and women. Meanwhile, almost all of them capitalize on stereotypes, whether they are about beauty, motherhood, tenderness, and youth.

Even so, researchers did not observe any stereotypes highlighted by one of the sources, namely Mrs Arniza Nilawati. The results of the interviews revealed that Mrs Arniza tended to highlight aspects of knowledge, experience, and communication. She said that during the campaign, more women came because they felt that there was closeness based on gender. Indeed, this cannot be said to be a strategic stereotype because the perception of closeness arises from society, and there is no evidence that the candidate is campaigning for or "selling" it.

Mrs Arniza's background is in the social sector, which is a feminine field, in contrast to the economics, which is a masculine field. However, this background is owned before the campaign, as well as her gender and religion, so this background cannot be said to be strategic.

Mrs Arniza is the only candidate who has no political background. He is also the only candidate who does not display a stereotyped strategy. These results indicate that stereotypes may not be used in vote-getting campaigns by focusing on knowledge and experience related to the discussed issues.

The second aim of this research is to identify the strategies female candidates use to gain support. These strategies play a role in overcoming challenges that arise to win the competition. Careful planning can overcome the problem of geographical conditions. Meanwhile, setting suitable targets allows female candidates to overcome societal patriarchal culture by targeting the female population. Symbolic communication using gender issues and issues related to women, such as health and education, is a typical strategy female candidates take in various election conditions (Ainiyah, 2019; Evans et

al., 2022). Also included in this strategy is selecting women as campaign targets due to gender bias in the female population (Carson et al., 2019). Candidates need to show constituents that they can lead and target urgent societal problems (Cargile & Pringle, 2020). Choosing the fitting symbol and communication allows candidates to increase their confidence by showing their feminine side in mediated interactions (Bauer & Carpinella, 2018; Carpinella & Bauer, 2021; Mattan & Small, 2021). Social media helps with time management because campaigns can be done from home.

Model of Women's Political Communication

The final objective related to this research is a model of women's political communication in winning the election for DPD RI members. Figure 1 shows that women's political communication needs to consider challenges from physical factors, internal DPD members, and external from the community by implementing a well-planned strategy. This plan contains how the candidate carries out symbolic interactions using appropriate visualization, colours, jargon, media, and language and selecting strategic stereotypes, such as using favourable stereotypes following the target population. Appropriately executed strategic plans can create political confidence and voter decisions that support a candidate's victory in elections and increase women's political participation.

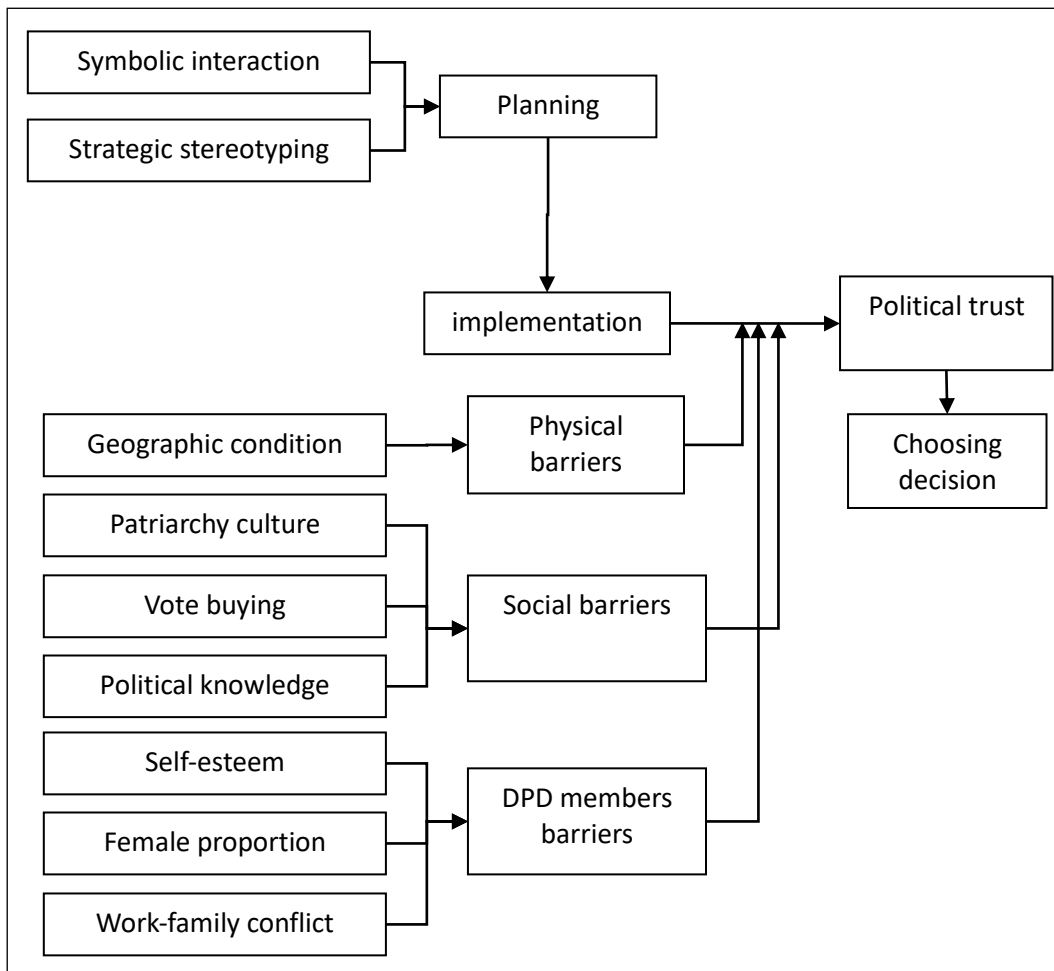


Figure 1. Model of Women's Political Communication in Winning the Election of DPD Members

These findings are essential for several reasons. First, although many studies have explored political communication as symbolic interaction, this research is the first to combine this theory with strategic stereotype theory. Strategic stereotype theory is another framework that enriches the symbolic communication often associated with voter irrationality. Second, in line with previous research, this study also identified that female

candidates have particular constraints not found in male candidates, such as work-family balance, female quantity, self-esteem, and patriarchal culture. Finally, this study provides a theoretical framework that allows testing using quantitative research on the proposition that planning has a positive effect on political confidence and has an impact on voting decisions moderated by several factors. These factors are geographical conditions, patriarchal culture, money politics, knowledge of the DPD function, self-esteem, quantity of women in parliament, and work-family balance. This research can be conducted on a sample of women fighting for seats as members of the DPR, DPD, or regional heads.

5. CONCLUSION

The aims of this study are: First, to understand the challenges faced by female DPD RI members who have won elections. Second, to understand how the strategy is used to overcome these challenges and formulate a model of women's political communication in winning the election for DPD RI members. This research contributes to the literature on women's political campaigns by showing how planning political communications can address women's physical, internal, and external challenges. The challenges faced by women in campaigning, both physical challenges such as geographical conditions, external challenges such as vote buying, patriarchal culture, and insufficient knowledge of DPD functions, as well as internal DPD challenges such as quantity in parliament, time management and self-confidence, can be overcome through a voter acquisition strategy based on building a network of families, communities, parties, women, visualization, colours, jargon, minimizing appointments, using local languages, planning, and using social media. This research adds to the literature on women's political campaigns by showing how political communication based on symbolic interactions and strategic stereotypes can build people's political trust and encourage women's participation in politics. Political trust was built because women won the people's sympathy, so they voted for them. This decision resulted in an election victory, encouraging more women's participation in parliament. This increase in participation encourages increased support for women's politics and reduces the obstacles to women's subsequent political involvement. Future research is expected to be able to translate the framework formulated by this research into a more thorough and expansive study using other methods. Other topics need to test whether symbolic interaction factors and strategic stereotypes positively impact people's political beliefs moderated by constraints. Future research is also expected to explore related issues such as women's attitudes and thoughts in politics, factors supporting women's victory in politics, the behaviour of post-elected candidates towards their constituents, and the prospects for women's politics.

References

- Ainiyah, N. (2019). The Political Role of Women in the City of Santri, Situbondo (Overview of Political Communication). *Islamic Studies Journal for Social Transformation*, 115. <https://doi.org/10.28918/isjoust.v2i2.1934>
- Bauer, NM, & Carpinella, C. (2018). Visual Information and Candidate Evaluations: The Influence of Feminine and Masculine Images on Support for Female Candidates. *Political Research Quarterly*, 71 (2), 395–407. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912917738579>
- Bratton, KA (2005). Critical Mass Theory Revisited: The Behavior and Success of Token Women in State Legislatures. *Politics & Gender*, 1 (01). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X0505004X>
- Busroni, A. (2021). DPD Legislative Function After Constitutional Court Decision Number 79/PUU-XII/2014. *Scientific Journal of Law: Inrichting Recht*, 3 (2), 24–40.
- Cardo, V. (2021). Gender politics online? Political women and social media at election time in the United Kingdom, the United States and New Zealand. *European Journal of Communication*, 36 (1), 38–52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323120968962>

- Cargile, IAM, & Pringle, L. (2020). Context Not Candidate Sex: A Case Study of Female Vote Choice for Mayor. *Urban Affairs Review*, 56 (6), 1659–1686. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087419861697>
- Carpinella, C., & Bauer, N.M. (2021). A visual analysis of gender stereotypes in advertising campaigns. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 9 (2), 369–386. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2019.1637353>
- Carson, A., Ruppner, L., & Lewis, JM (2019). Race to the top: Using experiments to understand gender bias towards female politicians. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 54 (4), 439–455. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2019.1618438>
- Castro-Vázquez, G. (2015). Shotgun weddings (dekichatta kekkon) in contemporary Japan. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 17 (6), 747–762. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2014.1000378>
- Charles, DD, Meena, A., Lalvani, S., Akbar, SZ, Siddharth, D., & Pal, J. (2020). Performing Gender, Doing Politics: Social Media and Women Election Workers in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. *Proceedings of the 2020 International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3392561.3394648>
- Chen, D., Park, K., & Joo, J. (2020). Understanding Gender Stereotypes and Electoral Success from Visual Self-presentations of Politicians in Social Media. *Joint Workshop on Aesthetic and Technical Quality Assessment of Multimedia and Media Analytics for Societal Trends*, 21–25. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3423268.3423583>
- Coronel, JC, Moore, RC, & deBuys, B. (2021). Do Gender Cues from Images Supersede Partisan Cues Conveyed via Text? Eye Movements Reveal Political Stereotyping in Multimodal Information Environments. *Political Communication*, 38 (3), 281–304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1763530>
- DPD RI. (2019). DPD Member of South Sumatra Province. <https://www.dpd.go.id/member/member>
- DPD RI. (2022). PPUU DPD RI Asks the Ministry of State Secretariat for Input Regarding the Digital Governance Bill. <https://dpd.go.id/register-berita/ppuu-dpd-ri-Minta-Masukan-kemasetneg-terkaitruu-Government-digital>
- Evans, HK, Gervais, BT, & Russell, A. (2022). Getting Good and Mad: Exploring the Use of Anger on Twitter by Female Candidates in 2020. In SD Foreman, ML Godwin, & WC Wilson (Eds.), *The Roads to Congress 2020* (pp. 53–71). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-82521-8_4
- Fridkin, K., & Kenney, P. (2014). *The changing face of representation: The gender of US senators and constituent communications*. The University of Michigan Press.
- Funk, KD, Paul, HL, & Philips, AQ (2022). Point break: Using machine learning to uncover a critical mass in women's representation. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 10 (2), 372–390. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2021.51>
- Indriani, S.S., & Mulyana, D. (2021). Communication patterns of Indonesian diaspora women in their mixed culture families. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 22, 1431-1448.
- Jungblut, M., & Haim, M. (2021). Visual Gender Stereotyping in Campaign Communication: Evidence on Female and Male Candidate Imagery in 28 Countries. *Communication Research*, 009365022110233. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00936502211023333>
- Kariryaa, A., Rundé, S., Heuer, H., Jungherr, A., & Schöning, J. (2022). The Role of Flag Emoji in Online Political Communication. *Social Science Computer Review*, 40 (2), 367–387. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439320909085>
- KPU. (2021). Recapitulation of Vote Count Results for Candidates for Members of the RI DPD for the 2019 Election for the Electoral District of South Sumatra, Bengkulu, Lampung, Riau Islands and Bangka Belitung Islands. General Election Commissions. <https://opendata.kpu.go.id/dataset/79fac846c-ec7eb68f8-6d69ed32f-89482>
- Manggiasih, B. (2015). Minangkabau woman, is she in power? *Rappers*. <https://www.rappler.com/world/90884-perempuan-minangkabau-apa-ia-berkuasa>

- Mardhiah, A., Hidayat, DR, Rahmat, A., & Sjafirah, NA (2019). Political Communication of Aceh's Women Legislators (Opportunities and Challenges of Women in Aceh in the Public Sphere). *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 3605, 1–12.
- Mattan, AJA, & Small, TA (2021). Worth a Thousand Words: The Study of Visual Gendered Self-Presentation on Twitter. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 54 (2), 477–490. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423921000032>
- McGregor, SC (2018). Personalization, social media, and voting: Effects of candidate self-personalization on vote intention. *New Media & Society*, 20 (3), 1139–1160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816686103>
- Melano, F. L., Hidayat, D. R., & Priyatna, C. C. (2020). Freedom At Work in the Post-Modernism Era in Organizational Culture Dimensions (In Indonesian). *Organizational communication in the Post-Modern Era (In Indonesian)*, pp.45-50.
- Mukarom, Z. (2022). Political Communication Strategies to Increase the Opportunity of Women's Political Representation in Indonesian Parliament. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 23 (1), 280–293.
- Mulyana, D. (2012). *Cultures and Communication (In Indonesian)*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Mulyana, D. (2018) *Qualitative Research Methods: Communication Science and other Social Sciences New Paradigm (In Indonesian)*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Omotoso, SA (2020). Acada-Activism and Feminist Political Communication in Nigeria. In SA Omotoso (Ed.), *Women's Political Communication in Africa* (pp. 155–172). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42827-3_10
- Petty, RE, & Cacioppo, JT (1986). The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 19, 123–205.
- Renner, A.-M., & Masch, L. (2019). Emotional woman – rational man? Gender stereotypical emotional expressivity of German politicians in news broadcasts. *Communications*, 44 (1), 81–103. <https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2017-0048>
- Sadie, Olanda. (2020). Women and Electoral Politics. In HA Thuynsma (Ed.), *Brittle Democracies? Comparing Politics in Anglophone Africa* (pp. 115–146). ESI Press.
- Sari, N., Hairini, SM, & Amin, MFM (2021). Informal Political Communication of Women in Local Democracy: Study at BPD Baliuk Village, Barito Kuala. *Metacommunication: Journal of Communication Studies*, 6 (2), 122–130. <https://doi.org/10.20527/mc.v6i2.11331>
- Schneider, MC, & Boss, AL (2019). The Application of Social Role Theory to the Study of Gender in Politics. *Political Psychology*, 40 (S1), 173–213. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12573>
- Silvast, A., Laes, E., Abram, S., & Bombaerts, G. (2020). What do energy modellers know? An ethnography of epistemic values and knowledge models. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 66, 101495. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2020.101495>
- Školník, M. (2022). Gifts for votes? Vote buying as a predictor of turnover in Latin America. *Latin American Policy*, 13 (1), 20–32. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lamp.12245>
- Slamet, A., Hidayat, D. R., Suryadi, K., & Aprilliani, D. S. (2020). Millennial Generation in West Java Governor Election: Political Communication and Information Media. In *International Conference on Business, Economic, Social Science, and Humanities–Humanities and Social Sciences Track (ICOBEST-HSS 2019)* (pp. 28-32). Atlantis Press.
- Storie, L., & Marschlich, S. (2022). Identity, Social Media and Politics: How Young Emirati Women Make Sense of Female Politicians in the UAE. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 27 (4), 789–807. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612221078795>
- Susila, I., Dean, D., Yusof, RNR, Setyawan, AA, & Wajdi, F. (2020). Symbolic Political Communication and Trust: A Young Voters' Perspective of the Indonesian Presidential Election. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 19 (1–2), 153–175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2019.1652224>

- Timambunan, HSR, & Prasetyo, DE (2019). Reconstruction of the Constitution in the Regional Representative Council of the Regional Representatives on Legislative Functions. *Legal Matters*, 48 (3), 266–274. <https://doi.org/10.14710/mmh.48.3.2019.266-274>
- Van der Pas, DJ, & Aaldering, L. (2020). Gender Differences in Political Media Coverage: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Communication*, 70 (1), 114–143. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqz046>
- Wasserman, V., & Frenkel, M. (2020). The politics of (in)visibility displays: Ultra-Orthodox women manoeuvring within and between visibility regimes. *Human Relations*, 73 (12), 1609–1631. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726719879984>
- WEF. (2021). *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*. World Economic Forum.
- Willumsen, DM (2019). So far away from me? The effect of geographical distance on representation. *West European Politics*, 42 (3), 645–669. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2018.1530887>
- Yoon, MY (2020). Voters' Perceptions of Gender Differences in Vote Buying: The Case of Tanzania. *Africa Spectrum*, 55 (2), 125–147. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002039720957010>
- Yu, Y. (2021). Metaphorical representations of "leftover women": Between traditional patriarchy and modern egalitarianism. *Social Semiotics*, 31 (2), 248–265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2019.1625515>