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Female Political Modalities and Representation Dynamics: A Study of the 2019 Legislative Elections

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ABSTRACT

Women's political presence in Indonesia is constrained despite a 30 percent gender quota, as the legislation applies only to the candidate nomination phase and does not guarantee electoral success. The disparity is apparent in the 2019 parliamentary election in Banjar City, West Java, where only one woman was elected out of 30 seats. This study analyses the political mechanisms that enabled a female candidate with limited resources to attain electoral success in a highly competitive, patriarchal local environment. Using a qualitative descriptive methodology, data were gathered through document analysis, electoral records from the General Election Commission, and comprehensive interviews with women voters in Pataruman District. The examination focused on four types of political capital: social, cultural, political, and economic. The results indicate that social capital was the most critical factor, as ongoing community involvement and women-focused networks fostered significant voter trust and grassroots support. Deficiencies in cultural and economic capital were effectively mitigated through the strategic use of gender narratives and volunteer-driven campaigns. Moderate political capital was bolstered by party affiliation and women-led mobilization. The study suggests that women's electoral success is not exclusively reliant on robust or elite political resources but may also be attained via the smart use of moderate approaches. This study advances the literature by redefining political capital as a dynamic, context-sensitive resource and offering novel insights into strategies to improve women's participation in local legislatures.

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Keywords:
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INTRODUCTION

Women's political representation has remained a central concern in both democratic theory and contemporary electoral studies, particularly in emerging democracies where institutional reforms coexist with deeply rooted sociocultural norms (Muriaas et al., 2022). In Indonesia, extensive legal frameworks have been established to promote gender inclusion in political institutions, beginning with Article 28H paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees equal opportunity and special measures to achieve justice for all citizens. This commitment is reinforced by Law No. 7/2017 on General Elections, which mandates that political parties nominate at least 30 percent female candidates across all electoral districts. Further operational directives are set in the General Elections Commission Regulation (PKPU) No. 20/2018, requiring each electoral district at the national, provincial, and municipal levels to include at least 30 percent women in party candidate lists. While these legislative acts represent a significant normative framework for gender equality, they do not regulate the final election outcomes (Guthridge et al., 2022; Kim, 2022). The quota applies only to nominations, not to the actual allocation of legislative seats, meaning that women must still compete

in an electoral arena shaped by party dynamics, voter preferences, and cultural predispositions. As such, the persistent underrepresentation of women in legislative bodies reflects complex structural constraints rather than insufficient regulatory support.

This disparity is highly visible in Banjar City, West Java, where the 2019 legislative election resulted in only one woman elected out of thirty available seats for the 2019–2024 term. The contrast between formal gender quotas and actual political outcomes highlights an enduring disconnect between institutional design and electoral realities. The low success rate of female candidates cannot be fully explained by the presence of legal quotas alone; instead, it suggests deeper issues embedded within the political and sociocultural environment (Fellegi et al., 2023; Weeks & Masala, 2023). Research across Indonesian regions has repeatedly shown that electoral competition, especially in multi-party systems, intensifies barriers for women, who often face patriarchal norms, limited access to campaign resources, and unequal organizational support within political parties. Recent international studies also observe similar patterns in other developing democracies, noting that women's electoral performance is heavily shaped by political capital, gendered social expectations, and unequal resource distribution (Jakimow, 2025; Mechkova et al., 2024).

Within this context, political modalities defined as the combination of social, cultural, political, and economic forms of capital become essential determinants of a candidate's viability (Anguelov, 2024; Batchelor et al., 2025). As outlined in Indonesian scholarship, modalities function as the resources candidates mobilize to gain legitimacy, build networks, influence voter perceptions, and accumulate political support. Angeloni et al. (2025) classify these modalities into four main categories: social capital, cultural capital, political capital, and economic capital, each consisting of specific measurable indicators.

The demographic and socio-political characteristics of the research participants involved in this study. The respondents were predominantly female voters residing in Pataruman District, reflecting the study's focus on women-centered political engagement. Most participants were within the productive age range, indicating active involvement in community and electoral activities. In terms of educational background, the majority had completed secondary education, while a smaller proportion possessed higher education qualifications, suggesting a heterogeneous voter base with varying levels of political awareness. Occupationally, respondents were largely engaged in informal and community-based economic activities, which facilitated close social interaction and grassroots communication. These characteristics illustrate a socially embedded voter group, providing a relevant context for analyzing how social networks and community trust influenced electoral behavior and political mobilization.

These modalities vary across candidates, and for female candidates, they often intersect with structural inequalities. Previous studies on Indonesian elections demonstrate that successful female candidates typically possess strong social networks, long-standing political affiliations, or substantial economic resources (Larasati et al., 2023; Sinpeng, 2025). However, many women, especially newcomers, lack access to these forms of capital. Existing research tends to focus primarily on women with robust political advantages, leaving limited scholarly insight into cases where a candidate with relatively moderate or "standard" modalities can still outperform stronger political competitors. This constitutes a significant research gap in the Indonesian context, where the relationship between women's modalities and their electoral success has not been fully examined in atypical cases.

The election of Ating, a female legislative candidate from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) in Banjar City, represents an important empirical anomaly. Despite possessing political capital that was not particularly strong, especially in terms of cultural and economic capital, she emerged as the only woman elected in 2019. Notably, her vote count surpassed not only other female candidates but also prominent political figures, including a former two-term Deputy Mayor

and senior party elites. In the PDIP internal vote count in the Banjar 2 electoral district, Ating received more votes than all other party candidates, including incumbents and experienced male politicians. This outcome suggests that the strategic use of modalities, especially social capital, can compensate for structural disadvantages and reshape gendered electoral trajectories. Furthermore, demographic data reinforce the strategic significance of the electoral district in which Ating campaigned. Pataruman District, her constituency, had the highest number of registered voters and the most valid votes cast in the 2019 election. Such demographic advantage, combined with a strong base of women voters, created a favorable environment for a female candidate who could effectively mobilize social capital.

Despite the extensive body of scholarship examining women's political participation in Indonesia, significant conceptual and empirical gaps remain, particularly regarding how female candidates with moderate political resources achieve electoral success (Halimatusa'diyah & Jannah, 2025). Existing studies predominantly focus on women who already possess strong political modalities, such as long-standing political lineage, substantial economic capital, entrenched party influence, or exceptional social networks (Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, 2023). These studies generally conclude that women's electability is strongly dependent on the accumulation of political, social, economic, and cultural capital (Jakimow, 2025; Priyanka, 2022; Yadav, 2023). However, this dominant narrative overlooks cases where female candidates without extraordinary resources manage to outperform more established rivals.

Furthermore, much of the literature conceptualizes political modalities as fixed structural advantages rather than dynamic assets that can be strategically mobilized in specific electoral contexts (Tholens & Hahn, 2025). Research tends to underexplore how candidates with ordinary or "standard" capital, particularly women, leverage contextual opportunities, demographic configurations, or targeted mobilization strategies to overcome structural constraints such as patriarchal norms, intra-party competition, and limited funding. This gap becomes particularly relevant in regions like Banjar City, where sociopolitical structures are heavily male-dominated, yet a female candidate secured a legislative seat despite lacking strong cultural and economic capital.

Additionally, prior research disproportionately centers on national or provincial-level contests, leaving local-level electoral dynamics comparatively understudied. Local elections often present unique sociocultural patterns and voter behaviors that differ from broader national trends, yet these dynamics remain insufficiently theorized in the context of women's political success (Biswas, 2022). The 2019 legislative election in Banjar City is an understudied case: only one woman was elected out of 30 seats, and her victory contradicts prevailing assumptions that female candidates require exceptional capital to succeed. International literature also reveals a research gap regarding how women navigate electoral environments in which formal gender quotas apply to the nomination stage but do not translate into equitable electoral outcomes (Carrión-Yaguana et al., 2023; Goyal, 2024). In Indonesia, the 30% quota applies to candidate lists but not to actual seat allocation, creating a structural disparity that is underexamined in empirical studies. There is a limited understanding of how women strategically adapt to this institutional mismatch.

This study, therefore, fills a critical research gap by examining a unique empirical case in which a female candidate, Ating, secured electoral victory despite possessing only moderate political capital. Unlike many cases in existing literature, her success cannot be attributed to dominant cultural prestige, exceptional financial backing, or elite political status. Instead, her strategic mobilization of social capital, targeted engagement with women voters, and effective grassroots networking appear to have compensated for her limited economic and cultural resources. This case challenges the prevailing assumption that strong modalities are prerequisites for women's electoral success and highlights the need to reconceptualize political capital not merely as an inherited advantage but as a resource that can be tactically constructed and deployed. The present study examines the political

capital of a female legislative candidate, Ating, in the 2019 legislative election in Banjar City, West Java. The analysis focuses on how she mobilized her political resources throughout the campaign. As discussed earlier, a candidate's political capital plays a decisive role in electoral success, particularly amid intense competition and persistent patriarchal norms. In the 2019 election, Ating ran under the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) in Electoral District 2, which covers Pataruman Subdistrict, and secured the highest number of votes within her party. Her vote count surpassed not only that of other PDI-P candidates, including H. Akhmad Dimyati, a two-term former Deputy Mayor of Banjar, but also the party's overall vote count in the district.

The distribution and intensity of political modalities utilized by the elected female candidate encompass social, cultural, political, and economic capital. The findings indicate that social capital was the dominant modality, as evidenced by strong community ties, sustained interpersonal communication, and active participation in women's social networks. Political capital was categorized as moderate, supported by party endorsement and involvement in party-based activities, though it was not the primary driver of electoral success. Cultural capital, reflected in formal education and symbolic authority, appeared relatively limited but was strategically leveraged through moral credibility and gender-based narratives. Economic capital was also moderate, as campaign activities relied more on volunteer support and social solidarity rather than extensive financial resources. Overall, the distribution of modalities highlights that the candidate's electoral success was driven by the effective combination and strategic mobilization of non-material resources rather than dependence on financial or elite political power.

According to the official vote recapitulation released by the General Election Commission (KPU) of Banjar City, West Java, Ating unexpectedly emerged as the only woman elected among the thirty members of the Banjar City Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) for the 2019–2024 term. She secured a notably high number of votes, ranking eighth overall among the thirty successful legislative candidates and placing second among all elected PDIP candidates, as shown in the following table. Ating's electoral victory in the Banjar City legislative contest cannot be separated from her strategic use of various forms of political capital, social, cultural, political, and economic. These forms of capital shape voter support, both directly and indirectly, creating a reciprocal relationship between a candidate's resources and the electorate's response during elections. The accumulation of these assets positioned Ating as the sole woman to secure a seat in the Banjar City Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) for the 2019–2024 term.

As a candidate, Ating was already known to the public, particularly in Pataruman District, where her social engagement, especially among women voters, had built significant social capital. Beyond this, she also possessed cultural capital as a native Sundanese woman who is deeply embedded in local cultural norms. Her political capital stemmed from her role as a board member and cadre of the Banjar City Branch Leadership Council (DPC) of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) during her candidacy. Lastly, she held economic capital derived from personal financial resources, which supported her campaign activities. These combined forms of political capital were mobilized during the campaign, enabling her to become the only female legislative candidate elected in Banjar City in 2019. However, the effectiveness of each type of capital varies, and its strategic use is essential to maximizing electoral outcomes. Examining how these resources operated in Ating's campaign constitutes the core focus of this study.

This research is expected to contribute new insights compared with previous studies on political capital in elections. Earlier works often examined candidates with uniformly strong political capital across social, cultural, political, and economic domains. In contrast, this study investigates a female legislative candidate, Ating, whose political capital was relatively modest and comparable to that of other contenders. Despite this, official results from the Banjar City Election Commission (KPU)

show that she secured a substantial number of votes and became the only woman elected for the 2019–2024 term. Thus, this study demonstrates that even candidates with moderate political capital can leverage their resources effectively to achieve electoral success. The problem addressed in this study can therefore be articulated as follows: although legal frameworks ensure the nomination of female candidates, the actual election of women remains disproportionately low, particularly in areas where sociocultural and political structures disadvantage female participation. The question that arises is: What specific political modalities enabled Ating a candidate with relatively standard resources to win a legislative seat and become the sole elected woman in Banjar City's 2019 election? Addressing this problem requires an in-depth exploration of her social networks, political strategies, cultural positioning, and resource mobilization.

Based on these concerns, the present study sets out to investigate the political modalities that shaped the success of the sole female legislative candidate elected in Banjar City's 2019 election. Specifically, the study aims to identify the types of political modalities she possessed, analyze how these modalities were strategically mobilized throughout the campaign, and examine why, though moderate in strength, they proved sufficient to secure electoral victory despite entrenched patriarchal structures and intense political competition. By pursuing these objectives, the study offers a new empirical perspective to the literature on women's political participation, demonstrating that electoral success can emerge not only from strong or elite-based resources but also from the effective deployment of modest political capital. In doing so, the research advances scholarly understanding of women's political agency in localized electoral contexts and provides a grounded analytical framework for evaluating the competitiveness of female candidates. Moreover, it enriches theoretical debates by conceptualizing political modalities not as static attributes but as dynamic assets shaped by strategic behavior, voter perceptions, and contextual opportunities. These insights resonate with contemporary international scholarship highlighting the interplay between gendered political capital, grassroots mobilization, and sociocultural constraints. Ultimately, this study illuminates how women can achieve electoral success even within structurally challenging environments, thereby contributing to broader comparative discussions on gender, representation, and political empowerment.

This study offers a distinct contribution to the literature by examining an atypical empirical case in which a female legislative candidate achieved electoral success despite possessing only moderate political capital. Unlike dominant scholarship, which associates women's electability with strong economic resources, elite political lineage, or entrenched institutional support, this research demonstrates how strategic mobilization of social capital can compensate for structural limitations. The novelty of this study lies in explicitly challenging the prevailing assumption that high levels of political capital are prerequisites for women's electoral success by providing empirical evidence from a context-sensitive local case where modest resources proved sufficient to secure representation.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the political modalities of a female legislative candidate who successfully secured a seat in the 2019 legislative election in Banjar City, West Java (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A qualitative descriptive approach was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of contemporary social and political phenomena, allowing the researcher to capture the complexity of political behavior, voter dynamics, and the strategic mobilization of political capital. Consistent with Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative descriptive research is suitable for understanding naturally occurring conditions and for interpreting social processes through the perspectives of involved actors. Given that political modalities are embedded in everyday interactions, social networks, and community structures, this design offered the flexibility necessary to contextualize the candidate's strategies within the broader sociocultural

environment. Data for this study were collected primarily through document analysis and literature review, supplemented by interviews as supporting sources, following the methodological principles outlined by Sugiyono (2018). The literature review drew upon academic journals, books, news articles, electoral reports, and official documents issued by the General Election Commission (KPU). These materials provided comprehensive insights into the institutional context of the 2019 election, historical patterns of women's political participation, and theoretical frameworks related to political modalities. To strengthen the empirical grounding of the analysis, additional qualitative data were obtained from interviews with voters, particularly women in Pataruman District, the candidate's electoral base. These interviews served as triangulation sources, ensuring that interpretations of the candidate's political modalities were aligned with actual voter perceptions and experiences. Respondents were selected purposively based on their participation in the 2019 election and familiarity with the candidate. The interviews focused on voters' understanding of the candidate's social engagement, campaign strategies, and perceived relevance to gender representation.

The study analyzed four categories of political modalities as conceptualized by Baharuddin et al. (2023): social capital, cultural capital, political capital, and economic capital. Each category included specific indicators such as trust networks, party affiliation, educational background, family lineage, campaign team structure, and financial resources. The goal was to determine the strength of each modality and evaluate how it contributed to the candidate's overall electoral competitiveness. Additionally, official electoral data from the KPU—such as voter demographics, total valid votes, and candidate vote counts were used to contextualize the scale of political competition in Banjar City. These data allowed the researcher to map the relationship between demographic patterns and the candidate's strategic positioning.

Data analysis followed an interactive process adapted from Miles and Huberman, consisting of data organization, thematic categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Interview transcripts, documents, and electoral records were first organized and coded into the four categories of political modalities. Relevant segments were then condensed into thematic matrices to identify recurring patterns across data sources. Interpretative analysis subsequently linked these patterns to theoretical constructs of political capital, enabling conclusions about the relative influence of each modality on electoral outcomes. This structured yet iterative procedure ensured analytical coherence while maintaining transparency in tracing thematic conclusions back to primary data.

To enhance credibility, this study employed methodological triangulation, using multiple data sources: literature, documents, official statistics, and interview narratives. Cross-referencing these sources allowed for more nuanced interpretations and reduced the risk of single-source bias. The triangulation process ensured that key findings, such as the importance of social capital and the strategic engagement of women voters, were supported by both documentary evidence and the lived experiences of community members. Triangulation strengthened methodological rigor by integrating interviews, electoral data, and documents. Analysis proceeded through coding raw data into modality-based categories, grouping codes into themes, and interpreting these themes using political capital theory to derive conclusions on electoral influence. This concise procedure ensured a transparent link between empirical data and thematic findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The 2019 legislative election in Banjar City, West Java, produced an exceptional outcome: only one woman, Ating, a candidate from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), secured a legislative seat. Among the 30 elected members of the DPRD Banjar, she ranked eighth overall and second among PDIP candidates. This outcome stands out given the highly competitive political environment and entrenched patriarchal norms in the region. Social capital represents one of Ating's

most tangible assets as a candidate. Strong social capital typically grows from long-standing interactions and sustained relationships. When such capital evolves into voter trust, as manifested in electoral support, it signifies that the candidate has nurtured positive, stable social ties with the community well before the election. In Ating's case, she invested considerable time in raising public awareness through political education, particularly encouraging women to participate actively in politics by exercising their voting rights.

Ating's commitment to political education was driven by her recognition of the significant potential for women in Banjar City to engage in politics and assume legislative roles. Historically, female representation in the Banjar City DPRD has been low, with only one woman serving during the 2014–2019 term. As a cadre and local leader within the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), Ating consistently delivered political education to female party members and the broader public. These activities were integrated into community gatherings such as religious study groups, sports events, social savings circles, and similar forums. She also conducted political outreach through women's religious assemblies and other community organizations, where she effectively communicated the importance of women's representation in government (Amin et al., 2022; Aririguzoh, 2022). Her emphasis on women's political agency aimed to ensure that women's interests could be directly advocated in policy-making processes. These patterns of sustained social engagement were further reinforced by the demographic profile of Electoral District (Dapil) II in Pataruman District Ating's constituency, which contains the largest number of registered voters, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Vote Acquisition of PDIP Candidates in Banjar 2 (2019)

Candidate	Votes
Suhardjono Sumarmo Putro	310
Ating	1,777
Femi Mahatma Furi	196
Solihin	111
Dalijo	888
Tanto Supriatna	465
Dewi Sriyaka	45
H. Akhmad Dimyati	575
Evi Firmansyah	139

Her vote count exceeded the party's total nominal vote (985), indicating that personal voter support, rather than party strength alone, drove her electoral success. Furthermore, demographic data show that the Pataruman District had the largest number of registered voters and the highest number of valid votes cast, thus providing a strategic advantage.

Table 2. Voter Population in Banjar City (2019)

District	Male	Female	Total Voters
Banjar	20,549	21,506	42,055
Purwaharja	8,200	8,781	16,981
Pataruman	22,326	22,555	44,881
Langensari	21,818	21,818	43,636

The voter data in Table 2 indicates that the electorate composition in Pataruman District Ating's designated electoral district indirectly strengthened her chances of winning. Pataruman recorded the highest number of registered voters in Banjar City, both overall and among women, compared with other districts. Moreover, the district ranked first in voter turnout, as reflected in the number of valid votes cast. These demographic advantages are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Valid Votes by District

District	Valid Votes
Pataruman	35,564
Banjar	34,226
Langensari	31,728
Purwaharja	13,733

Table 3 illustrates that Ating benefited from two key advantages as a candidate. First, the Pataruman District had the largest voter population, including the highest number of female voters, among the districts in Banjar City. Second, Pataruman also recorded the highest number of valid votes cast. These conditions increased the likelihood that Ating could achieve her targeted vote share, particularly when combined with effective management and utilization of her social capital. Beyond demographic advantages, Ating's victory was also the result of her sustained effort to cultivate meaningful social interactions with voters. Interviews conducted with female voters in Pataruman highlight this dynamic. One respondent stated:

> *"I voted for a woman in the 2019 election because I wanted more female representation in the DPRD. Previously, there was only one woman. Since Banjar City already has a female mayor, the DPRD should also have more women. I chose Mrs. Ating not only because she is a woman, but also because she is active in the community and in the PDIP leadership. I know her personally, so I voted for her." (Interview with a female voter in Pataruman, 12 September 2022).*

Cultural capital refers to resources derived from a candidate's educational background, family lineage, or social prestige, such as noble titles or recognized religious status (Zhou, 2022). While such capital may be obtained through formal education, it may also be inherited, for example, through aristocratic descent, affiliation with prominent religious leaders, and similar sources of cultural authority. In this study, Ating's cultural capital is categorized as relatively weak. During her candidacy in the 2019 legislative election in Banjar City, she had not yet attained a higher education degree. Although this did not violate legal requirements for candidacy, it placed her at a disadvantage in terms of cultural capital when compared with other candidates who held bachelor's or even master's degrees. Some of her political competitors also possessed religious titles such as *haji*, which further enhanced their symbolic standing. Additionally, Ating did not come from a noble family or a well-known lineage in Banjar City, which meant she did not benefit from inherited prestige or family-based cultural influence.

Despite these limitations, Ating did not view her lack of cultural capital as an obstacle. Instead, it motivated her to strengthen the strategic use of her other political resources, particularly social capital. She focused on engaging women voters, highlighting their underrepresentation in the Banjar City DPRD and emphasizing the need for stronger female participation in political decision-making. By appealing to women's shared experiences and concerns, she sought to mobilize support rooted in gender-based solidarity and political awareness. This strategy is reflected in interviews with female voters in Pataruman District. One respondent explained:

"During the campaign, I became aware that the DPRD Banjar had very few women. It has always been difficult for women to become DPRD members. Many people during the campaign, especially supporters of Mrs. Ating, said that we should increase women's representation by voting for female candidates. Hearing this made me more conscious, and I chose Mrs. Ating because I wanted more women in the DPRD." (Interview with a female voter in Pataruman, 11 September 2022)

Political capital refers to resources derived from a candidate's formal political positions, party support, and the strength of their campaign organization (Baharuddin et al., 2023; Lyon et al., 2024). In Ating's case, her political capital is moderate. She was a cadre and local party official within the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), the dominant political party in Banjar City. However, her political standing was less prominent than that of one of her intra-party competitors in the same electoral district, H. Akhmad Dimyati, who had previously served as the Chair of the PDIP Banjar City Branch Leadership Council (DPC) and as the two-term Deputy Mayor of Banjar. From the perspective of political capital, Dimyati clearly possessed stronger institutional and symbolic advantages.

Despite this, Ating held a key advantage: a highly committed and cohesive support network composed primarily of women voters. This team played a central role in promoting her candidacy, operating consistently and intensively throughout the campaign. They seized everyday opportunities to introduce Ating to other women, for instance, during school drop-offs, vegetable shopping, and routine visits to local markets or commercial centers. These informal encounters became strategic moments for direct, word-of-mouth campaigning. In addition, Ating's women-led campaign network extended its influence beyond female circles by persuading male family members, husbands, sons, fathers, and in-laws to vote for her as well. This strategy strengthened Ating's dominance among female voters, a feat that male candidates are less likely to replicate due to social and cultural dynamics surrounding gendered communication. Interview data from Pataruman District confirms the effectiveness of this approach. As one voter explained:

"I often heard Mrs. Ating's name because women frequently talked about her at gatherings or whenever we happened to meet. They said that she was one of the female candidates who would represent women in the DPRD, so she needed to be supported to ensure that women's needs could be better advocated in Banjar City." (Interview with a voter in Pataruman, 13 September 2022)

Economic capital in electoral politics refers to the financial resources available to a candidate, essential for covering campaign costs and operational expenses (Jakimow et al., 2023; Sule et al., 2022). In Indonesia, political expenditures are widely known to be substantial, often reaching hundreds of millions or even billions of rupiah. As a legislative candidate in Banjar City, Ating did not possess particularly strong economic capital; her financial capacity was comparable to that of other candidates. In Electoral District II, Pataruman, she competed against well-established figures, including H. Akhmad Dimyati, a two-term former Deputy Mayor, as well as several incumbent legislators who generally had more stable and significant financial resources. Nonetheless, Ating's limited economic capital did not diminish her bargaining position in the eyes of voters, particularly women. Instead, it strengthened her resolve to refine and strategically deploy her other political assets, especially social capital. Recognizing the substantial number of female voters in Pataruman, she emphasized gender representation as a central theme in her campaign. Through repeated social interactions, she highlighted the underrepresentation of women in Banjar City's legislative body and framed her candidacy as an opportunity to advance women's interests in public policy. This gender-focused outreach resonated strongly with female voters, as evidenced by interview findings. One respondent explained:

> *"In the 2019 campaign, we were given political education about the importance of women's roles and representation in politics, especially in Banjar City. Women in the DPRD were still very limited, even though the city already had a female mayor. So I agreed that women should participate more in politics. Women understand each other better, so I chose a female candidate." (Interview with a female voter in Pataruman, 12 September 2022)*

This study found that social capital was the most critical modality enabling Ating, a female legislative candidate with moderate political resources, to secure electoral success in a highly patriarchal and competitive local context. Cultural and economic capital were limited, yet strategic mobilization of social networks, women-focused outreach, and grassroots volunteerism compensated for these constraints. These findings partially align with previous studies suggesting that political capital, including social, cultural, and economic resources, plays a decisive role in women's electoral performance (Jakimow, 2025; Priyanka, 2022; Mechkova et al., 2024). Social capital appears pivotal, yet this study highlights its potential to offset deficits in other forms of capital. Unlike most prior research, which emphasizes women with substantial financial backing or entrenched political positions (Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, 2023; Sinpeng, 2025), the present case demonstrates that moderate resources, when strategically mobilized, can yield electoral success, suggesting a more dynamic conceptualization of political modalities.

This divergence from conventional assumptions underscores the study's novelty: it challenges the idea that only women with strong political, economic, and cultural capital can succeed, emphasizing context-sensitive strategies and grassroots mobilization as decisive factors. International studies also show that female candidates often face institutional and sociocultural barriers even under gender quota regimes (Carrión-Yaguana et al., 2023; Goyal, 2024). The Banjar City case confirms that formal quotas alone do not guarantee success, echoing global findings on the critical role of localized social and demographic dynamics in shaping electoral outcomes. The results suggest that political modalities should be conceptualized not as static, inherited advantages but as dynamic, deployable resources contingent upon candidate strategy and constituency characteristics (Tholens & Hahn, 2025; Anguelov, 2024). This perspective advances theoretical understanding of women's political agency in local elections, complementing both Indonesian and comparative scholarship.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that women's election success in local legislative positions is not exclusively contingent on robust economic resources or elite political support, but is also substantially affected by the strategic mobilization of political modalities, especially social capital. The principal findings indicate that ongoing community involvement, trust-oriented social networks, and women-focused grassroots mobilization were crucial in overcoming constraints on economic and cultural capital. Moderate political capital, bolstered by party affiliation and volunteer-led campaigning, was sufficient to sustain electoral viability in a competitive, patriarchal environment. The implementation of these findings significantly enhances women's political representation, underscoring the efficacy of community-based initiatives and gender-responsive political involvement over resource-intensive campaigns. By implementing these strategies, political parties, candidates, and policymakers can cultivate more inclusive and sustainable avenues for enhancing women's participation and representation in local governance, thereby reinforcing democratic legitimacy and responsiveness at the grassroots level.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing process of this manuscript.

CONFLICTING INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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