



NETWORK POLITICS OF THE WINNING OF BUSINESS CANDIDATE ROMEO LINDANG IN THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

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Network politics in Romeo Lindang's legislative victory in Electoral District 4, is a complex study because it displays various social, cultural, economic and political dynamics, and the candidates involved in the election contest have different backgrounds, both incumbents and newcomer candidates. This study aims to determine: (1) the candidate's network politics in building trust with the voting public and the resources used ; (2) the methods used by Romeo Lindang in winning the legislative election ; (3) political actors involved in the election contestation process and their roles that have an impact on winning the legislative election. For this purpose, the approach used is the public choice approach, as an application of economic methods to politics to understand the dynamics of the candidate's personal network politics. This study uses a qualitative method. The data sources are secondary data, sourced from literature such as books, journals, theses, dissertations, and documents. Meanwhile, for primary data, an interview technique with topic guides was used, which focuses more on topics, rather than questions. The data analysis technique uses the model proposed by Miles and Hubermas, which begins with data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of this study indicate that the political network of Romeo Lindang's victory in the legislative election was determined through the application of economic methods, which fostered a positive image (social capital) which was then converted into political support.

Keywords: *network politics, entrepreneurs, legislative elections*

INTRODUCTION

Article 1 (one) of the 1945 Constitution states that sovereignty lies in the hands of the people and is exercised according to the constitution. The constitution regulates how state administrators are elected directly through general elections (Ramlan Surbakti, et.al, 2008). The 2019 and 2024 general elections are regulated by Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning general elections, where the election of the president and vice president is held simultaneously with the legislative elections, both national and local.

The election mechanism opens up ample opportunities for all citizens to participate in politics. This political participation is not limited to electoral contests, but also includes citizen enthusiasm in the form of voting, seeking support for a candidate, and other activities. Examining the procedures and processes of elections and regional elections, a candidate participating in a legislative election needs three primary assets: political capital , social capital , and economic capital . These assets can influence a candidate's ability to gain public support. The greater a candidate's accumulated capital, the greater the support they will receive (Kacung Marijan, 2010).

It's interesting to examine the figure of Romeo Lindang, who won the 2024 legislative elections in North Halmahera Regency. Having a background as a copra and nutmeg commodity entrepreneur since 2007, he then became involved in the legislative election contest supported by the Democratic Party. Romeo Lindang is not a party cadre, but was successfully elected with the most votes in Electoral District 4 and overall in North Halmahera Regency. This reality illustrates Romeo Lindang's victory in the 2024 legislative elections in North Halmahera Regency, allegedly determined by the network politics he built through economic investment involving his customers in a controlled manner.

Politics and business are intertwined, so it's no surprise that businesspeople are closely involved in politics. Even in many European countries and the United States, relationships between those in power (politicians) and those in power (businesspeople) are commonplace. These relationships typically involve financial matters or funding a candidate's campaign (Herning Suryo, 2014).

In this regard, this research was conducted in Electoral District 4 (Galela-Loloda) of North Halmahera Regency. The Galela-Loloda electoral district ecologically consists of six sub-districts: Galela, South Galela, West Galela, North Galela, North Loloda, and Loloda Islands. Eight seats are available. The sub-ethnic groups inhabiting Galela and Loloda Districts are the Galela and Loloda tribes, while the remainder are immigrants, such as the Javanese, Bugis, and Buton, who reside in Galela and Loloda Districts seeking employment. In terms of occupation, the majority of the population of Galela and Loloda Districts work as farmers. The majority of the population is Muslim and Christian, based on their religious beliefs (BPS North Halmahera, 2022).

This condition illustrates that the society in the Galela-Loloda electoral district is no longer simple, but rather complex, with various social and political dynamics within it. Electoral District 4 was chosen because the general conditions of the legislative candidate competition in electoral district 4 are very competitive. Internally, Romeo Lindang competes with incumbent legislative candidate Berty Sikawi who is also supported by the Democratic Party. Externally, Romeo Lindang competes with incumbent legislative candidate Cristina Lesnussa (member of the North Maluku Provincial DPRD, from the Golkar Party), wife of the North Halmahera regent Frans Maneri (active regent), who chose to run as a legislative candidate at the North Halmahera district level. Furthermore, there are incumbent legislative candidates Irwan Jam from PDIP, Fahmi Musa (PKB), Fahmi Djuba (PPP), Sahri Hi Rauf (Hanura), Budianto Gawasala (PKPI), North Halmahera KPUD, 2014.

Network politics in this study places candidate Romeo Lindang and the voting public in a mutually beneficial position, both as entrepreneurs and customers, as well as the winning team and the voting public. In general election activities, his relationship with the winning team was formed over a long period of time, starting with Romeo Lindang's involvement in one of the gubernatorial candidates for North Maluku and the regent candidate for North Halmahera in 2019; the winning team he formed was then used as part of the winning campaign in the 2024 legislative elections, complemented by the recruitment of additional winning teams he formed in 2022.

According to Coleman, rational choice theory defines individual action as directed toward a goal, viewing that goal as determined by values or choices. Coleman's theory has two main elements : actors and resources. Actors choose actions that maximize utility or satisfy their desires and needs. Resources, on the other hand, are things that attract attention and can be controlled by actors. Rational choice theory considers individuals' preferences, beliefs, and feasible strategies as the causes of their actions. Mainstream variants of rational choice assume that individuals possess

the rational capacity, time, and emotional attachment necessary to choose a sound course of action, regardless of its complexity (Ni Ktut Arniti, 2020).

Related to this, there are several studies that investigate the victory of legislative candidates with various approaches and strategies they use. For example, Joni Firmansyah's research that examined the victory of Asaat Abdullah in the legislative elections of West Nusa Tenggara Province in 2019. In his conclusion, Asaat Abdullah's victory was determined by political marketing strategies, namely push marketing, pass marketing, and pull marketing, by understanding the political market, the use of kinship networks, party networks, volunteer networks and community elites. In addition, Asaat Abdullah also utilized mass media and social media (Joni Firmansyah, 2020). Second, Renita Ananda & Tengku Rika Valentina's research, on the victory of Athar Gauthi Ardi in the 2019 legislative elections in West Sumatra, in conclusion his victory was inseparable from the intervention and image of his parents' big names. Her parents' big names are used as branding for the candidate's product in political marketing, both in campaigns that always involve her parents, the creation of billboards with photos with her parents, and her posts on social media such as Facebook (fb) always include her parents' names (Renita Ananda & Tengku Rika Valentina, 2021). Third, research by Bias Fajar Lagabuana, et.al, on surviving and winning: Sri Rahmi's strategy and political capital in the 2004-2019 legislative elections in South Sulawesi. In their conclusion, there are several factors that support Sri Rahmi in maintaining her power, namely social capital such as personality, which is known to be religious, popular and has a social network through organizations and has a prominent family. In addition, there is also the contribution of a large party, supporting Sri Rahmi, namely the PKS party, which represents the majority of the Muslim community of Makassar (Bias Fajar Lagabuana, et.al, 2021).

Neither Joni Firmansyah, Renita Ananda & Tengku Rika Valenta, nor Bias Fajar Lagabuana, et.al, revealed that the victory of legislative candidates was determined by network politics. This study discusses network politics in winning the 2024 legislative elections, with a research focus on the candidate's network politics in building trust with the voting public and the resources used, the methods used by Romeo Lindang in winning the legislative elections, as well as the political actors involved in the election contestation process and their roles that impact the victory of the legislative elections.

METHOD

Research Objects and Locations

The object of this research is network politics in the victory of candidate Romeo Lindang in the legislative election for Electoral District Four (Galela-Loloda) of North Halmahera Regency in 2024. This research is limited to the candidate's network politics in building trust with the voting public and the resources used, the methods used by Romeo Lindang in winning the legislative election, as well as the political actors involved in the election contestation process and their roles that have an impact on winning the legislative election.

This research uses a qualitative approach. This method was chosen considering the broad scope of the problem and the multidimensional phenomenological relationships among issues, data/information, facts, and empirical events. This method is expected to explore and understand the main points and scope of the research problem in a comprehensive, in-depth, and comprehensive manner.

The data in this research, such as secondary data, namely similar study literature and references of academic value (books, journals and scientific work reports such as theses and dissertations),

documents of various relevant laws and regulations, as well as other written sources such as news, articles and opinions in the mass media, and others will be collected using document studies.

Meanwhile, for various primary data, semi-structured interviews will be used, conducted face-to-face with the research informants. Interviews in this study will be conducted using *topic guides*, where the interviews will focus more on the topic, rather than the questions.

The informants and their numbers in this study were selected based on characteristics commonly used in qualitative research. Following some of Spradley's suggestions in Sugiono, the informants in this study were individuals with deep and extensive involvement in the political victory of businessman candidate Romeo Lindang's network in the 2024 legislative elections in Electoral District Four (Galela-Loloda) of North Halmahera Regency.

The data analysis technique in this study will use the model proposed by Miles and Huberman in Sugiono, a technique in which data is analyzed interactively and continuously until complete. This model consists of three integrated data sets: data simplification (*data reduction*), data presentation (*data display*), and conclusion *drawing/ verification* (Agus Sutisna, 2017).

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Network Politics Candidates Build Trust With Voters and Resources Used.

Network politics in Electoral District Four (Galela-Loloda District) of North Halmahera Regency in 2024 is a complex study because it displays various social, economic, cultural and political dynamics, where there are two sub-ethnic groups inhabiting the area, with their political behaviors that tend to be different.

To understand the political network of candidate Romeo Lindang in building trust with the voting public in winning the 2024 legislative elections, it cannot be separated from the dynamics of the copra and nutmeg commodity business relations that he is engaged in. Through this business channel, Romeo Lindang builds social capital (public trust) using economic resources, which then forms political capital. As a copra and nutmeg commodity entrepreneur, in running his business Romeo Lindang builds business relationships with customers, in part by providing business capital to copra buyers in other villages who then form small networks that bind individuals and families.

In Bourdieu's view of social capital, as quoted by Dessy Ramadhani & Dian Eka Rahmawati, capital is defined as a determining factor in an agent's position in the struggle for political power. He identified four ideal types of capital derived from the economic environment: cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capital. These four types of capital are interconnected and interdependent, although the absence of any one of them does not necessarily mean failure (Dessy Ramadhani & Dian Eka Rahmawati, 2020).

In addition, copra and nutmeg farmers in the region also build direct personal and family relationships with Ko Romi, Romeo Lindang's nickname among the local community. These relationships are used by the farmers to settle debts (copra labor costs), as well as for educational needs, healthcare, funeral expenses for deceased family members, wedding expenses, and other expenses.

In line with that, according to Andrain in AA Sahid Gatara (2009), power derived from economic resources is a model of power where political actors have certain material resources (technological tools, wealth, income, property rights, and control rights over goods and services) that can be used to climb the political ladder so as to have influence or obedience. By providing material rewards to others and strengthening the basis of personal and organizational networks, actors holding power can gain influence and obedience.

The repayment of debts by copra farmers is handled through copra and nutmeg sales transactions. Some debts are fully deducted/repaid upon sale of the copra, while others are partially repaid or without any deduction at all, depending on the agreement between the customer and buyer. This business relationship not only benefits Romeo Lindang but also the farming community.

According to John F Halliweel, empirical claims about the importance of social capital include; (1) social capital is always important for the development of human resource capital. (2) social capital is considered to be able to increase individual welfare and subjective happiness. (3) social capital is also considered important in minimizing costs and risks that may be incurred in economic activities (4) social capital can move individuals or groups to carry out vertical social mobility. Bordieu defines social capital as a collection of a number of resources, both actual and potential, which are connected to the ownership of networks or relationships that have been more or less institutionalized in mutual understanding and recognition. Renita Ananda & Tengku Rika Valentina (2021).

In addition, candidate Romeo Lindang also built trust with the voting public, during the 2019 gubernatorial election contest. Romeo Lindang formed a winning team at the sub-district and village levels around Galela District. Furthermore, Romeo Lindang also used the same winning team in the 2019 North Halmahera Regency regent election. His role as a winning team in the gubernatorial and regent elections; Romeo Lindang used personal capital to handle the needs of the winning team.

As time went by, and based on the advice and considerations of his clients and the winning team he had formed during the 2019 North Maluku gubernatorial election and the 2019 North Halmahera regent election, he developed the intention to run as a legislative candidate in 2024.

For Robert Putnam, social relations that arise from reciprocal relationships will correlate and have social value and contribute to political participation, both individual and collective (John Field, 2010).

Through funding gubernatorial and regental elections, and the trust he built through his business relationships, he fostered trust among voters. This then became Romeo Lindang's political capital in participating in the 2024 legislative elections. It was through the advice and considerations of this winning team that Romeo Lindang became a candidate for the 2024 legislative elections.

In Andrain's view, it is part of political power, namely the dimensions of potential and actual power. This dimension, as interpreted by Ramlan Surbakti, is that a person is seen as having potential power if he has sources of power such as wealth, weapons, knowledge and information, popularity, high social status, a mass organizational base and position. On the other hand, a person is seen as having actual power if he has used the resources he has in political activities effectively (achieving goals), Ramlan Surbakti, (2010).

The Methods Used by Romeo Lindang to Win the Legislative Elections

According to Andrain, the driving factor for someone to use their resources to appear in the arena of political power is motivation. The indications of this motivation, in Andrain's view, include: (1) important values associated with the goal, namely that it is desired; (2) knowledge of the means (organizational resources) to achieve the goal; (3) the level of dependence on political strategies to achieve a goal; (4) expected success in realizing the goal, namely the feeling of having high political competence and low political fatalism; (5) views regarding the costs and benefits that may result from the struggle to achieve the goal. Meanwhile, the factor of utilizing political

resources "is the extent to which an actor is motivated to use the resources he has in gaining political influence and power. This motivation also refers to various methods of organizing resources in certain ways, including through strengthening the personal network base (AA Sahid Gatar, 2008).

In this regard, Romeo Lindang conducted recruitment and formation of a winning team. The formation of the winning team began with the succession of the 2019 North Maluku gubernatorial election and the North Halmahera regent election, which were limited to the Galela region. Then, a new winning team was formed in 2022, covering the Galela and Loloda regions. Through this winning team, limited and intensive meetings were held between voters and legislative candidate Romeo Lindang after he became a permanent candidate, to discuss winning strategies and the aspirations and hopes of voters before and after his election.

In Charles F. Andrain's view, actors or individuals are a key part of political life. Furthermore, according to him, actors are a term that refers to people or individuals who play a role in the political arena (AA Sahid Gatar, 2008).

In addition to forming a winning team, Romeo Lindang also intensively conducted political outreach in several villages regarding his candidacy for legislative office, as well as creating and installing political billboards as a publicity medium. In any election, political dynamics are inevitable, meaning interactions that occur during the nomination process. This is called the branding process carried out by legislative candidates (political elites) to gain self-image or public attention regarding the actor's (candidate's) readiness to participate in the election contest (Reza Retamara, et.al, 2023).

On election day, February 14, 2024, Romeo Lindang also set up a public kitchen to serve his supporters' food and beverage needs after voting. The distribution of public kitchens was determined by the number of voters. If the village had a small number of voters, there would only be one public kitchen. If the village had a medium number of voters, two public kitchens were provided, and if the village had a large number of voters, three public kitchens were provided.

The budget allocated for outreach, campaign recruitment, billboard construction and installation, and public kitchen procurement ranges from Rp 320 million to Rp 500 million. This amount does not include donations for church and mosque construction. Overall, candidate Romeo Lindang's budget for the legislative election contest ranges from Rp 700 million to Rp 750 million.

According to Andrain, the use of economic resource types (wealth), the power model inherent in the context of actors (candidates) is economic power, namely how to use wealth resources to obtain a position so that it can provide influence and compliance (adapting behavior) to other people.

Similarly, while confirming the assumptions of the above study, Surbakti argues that political resources for political actors (legislative candidates) with a business background are wealth or capital resources. In this case, Surbakti views power resources in the form of wealth as money, gold, land, valuables, and securities. Meanwhile, other relevant resources in the context of entrepreneurs, particularly as a means of actualizing existing resources, are personal networks within various organizations, both interest groups and political organizations. Here, entrepreneurs are seen as part of business interest groups that tend to be effectively organized (Ramlan Surbakti, 2010).

Political Actors Involved in the Election Contestation Process and Their Roles in Impacting Legislative Election Wins

Romeo Lindang has chosen to run for the 2024 North Halmahera Regency Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), representing the Democratic Party. According to Susi Fitria Dewi in her book, "Sociologi Politik," a person who becomes a representative of the people (legislative) certainly has a "door" or channel into the political world, enabling him to obtain that position. The first door is through recruitment to become a member of a political party. Political parties themselves conduct selection processes for members who will be registered as representatives of their legislative candidates (Susi Fitria Dewi, 2017).

The reason for choosing the Democratic Party is because it is a major political party, with candidates running in the legislative election in the Galela-Loloda electoral district. Its presence is already well-known to the wider public. This can help the party gain votes. Furthermore, Romeo Lindang's reason for choosing the Democratic Party is because he has measured the social, economic, and political capital of the legislative candidates within the party in the competition for voters in the 2024 legislative election in the Galela-Loloda electoral district.

Based on data from the 2024 North Halmahera Election Commission (KPUD), Romeo Lindang received 1,913 votes, Berthy Sikwai (723, not elected), Cristina Lesnussa (1,774), Irwan Jam (989), Fahmi Musa (1,445), Fahmi Djuba (480, not elected), Sahri Hi Rauf (chose not to run again), Budianto Gawasala (712). Based on the number of votes, Romeo Lindang received the most votes, surpassing the incumbent candidate in Electoral District 4 and even the overall vote count for candidates in North Halmahera Regency.

Romeo Lindang's vote acquisition is inseparable from the political capital he possesses. According to Kacung Marijan (2010), political capital means the existence of political support, both from the people and from political forces that are seen as representatives of the people. This capital is central to all those who intend to participate in the election contest, both in the nomination stage and in the election stage.

Regarding the actors involved in the election contestation process and their roles that impact the winning of the legislative elections; in recruiting the winning team, Romeo Lindang made direct contact with the individuals concerned, who had experience, had won voters' votes in several previous election or regional election activities.

In their study of modalities in candidate electability in the 2014 legislative elections, Maydi Zefanya Sirait, *et al.*, argued that communication is the key to social capital. Communication is the process by which individuals convey information, as well as their intentions and goals, both general and personal. The initial stages of forming connections or relationships between individuals and groups arise from communication. The trust that arises between individuals is a result of the communication process (Maydi Zefanya Sirait, *et al.*, 2020).

Through the discussion process, regarding Romeo Lindang's motivation to choose to run as a legislative candidate in 2024. And considering that Romeo Lindang, who is considered to be generous, in helping the community or is considered to have a positive image in the community, finally the political actors (winning team) are willing to accept the offer to be part of the winning political struggle process, on the grounds that Romeo Lindang's figure is easy to sell and can be accepted by the voting public and has a high chance of winning.

Similarly, according to the public choice approach, this theory describes how political economists typically view politics in a democratic manner, which provides space for mutual exchange between the public, political parties, the government, and bureaucrats. In this context, voters are positioned as buyers of collective (public) goods, while the government and political parties are considered alternative providers of public goods and services policies so that in the long term they can garner support from voters through general elections. On a broader level, public

choice theory can be interpreted as the application of economic methods to politics (Mitchell, quoted by Ahmad Erani Yustika, 2009).

The role played by political actors in Romeo Lindang's victory included personal door-to-door contact, reminding voters of the various grants he had provided for church and mosque construction. He then conveyed the legislative oversight role in development discourse, including economic empowerment, welfare, justice, and equality, which Romeo Lindang could be entrusted with if elected.

The role of actors in political life is significant, particularly in the political victory of Romeo Lindang's network of business candidates. As Andrain emphasized, actors are not passive subjects who merely react to external values and structural conditions. They not only accept existing roles but also create new ones. They not only respond to established structures but also change structural conditions (AA Sahid Gatara, 2008).

CONCLUSION

After going through the previous discussion, there are several main points that can be concluded in writing this article:

- a. Regarding network politics, building trust with voters in winning the legislative election in Electoral District 4, North Halmahera Regency in 2024; this is done by investing economic capital through business activities, as a long-term investment in social relations and building cooperation.
- b. Regarding the methods used by Romeo Lindang in the legislative election contest, Romeo Lindang recruited and formed a winning team well in advance of his candidacy, namely in 2019 and 2022, before becoming a permanent candidate. In addition, Romeo Lindang also conducted outreach, put up billboards, held intensive meetings with the winning team, and set up a public kitchen to provide food and drink to voters after the election.
- c. Regarding the political actors involved in the election contestation process and their roles that impacted the victory of the legislative election; in recruiting the winning team, Romeo Lindang directly contacted the individuals concerned, who had experience, had won voters' votes in every previous election or regional election activity. The role played by political actors in the victory of Romeo Lindang's candidate, such as making personal contacts from house to house, by reminding voters regarding a number of assistance for the construction of church buildings and the construction of mosques that he had provided.

SUGGESTION

The essence of network politics related to winning legislative elections is how to use economic capital to grow the trust of voters (social capital) and build political support (political parties, winning teams), by utilizing network bases such as interest groups, political parties, organizational networks and others and building continuous communication with the winning team, as a liaison between candidates and the voting public.

Candidates planning to contest elections are advised to not only consider the election situation itself but also the needs of the voting public, as political resources are not evenly distributed among all voters. Therefore, in a winning legislative election strategy, candidates need to understand the social realities and needs of the voting public, and then actualize potential resources to build trust (social capital) and political capital through the candidate's personal network.

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