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## Implications of Direct Regional Head Elections: Independent vs. Political Party Candidates in Metro City, Lampung Province

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### **Abstract:**

*The phenomenon that is the object of research is the contestation of direct regional head elections for independent candidate pairs versus political party candidate pairs and the continuity of government after the regional head elections in Metro City, Lampung Province, phenomenally won by independent candidate pairs. This study aims to analyze the contestation of independent candidate pairs versus political party candidate pairs in Metro City in the 2020 regional elections won by independent candidates; develop a strategy for independent candidate pairs winning the 2020 regional election contestation to maintain the continuity of government after the regional head elections. This research method uses descriptive qualitative methods with 4 research informants. The results of the study can be concluded that the victory of individual candidate pairs in the contestation of Pilkada in Metro City in 2020 analyzed by referring to Bourdie's Capital Theory is still felt less than optimal, because individual candidate pairs do not get political support from political actors in Metro City. Political Capital Theory is seen as very weak. As a real strategy, each individual candidate pair must have Reputation Capital as the main capital for candidates through individual channels. The continuity of the government after the victory of the individual candidate pairs that lack support from the Legislative Members can apply a persuasive communication approach strategy by prioritizing the Community of People, Attempted Influence, Beliefs, Values and Attitude as the main basis for running the government.*

**Keywords:** Contestation, Individual Candidates, Capital Theory

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## 1. Introduction

Basically, the emergence of individual (independent) candidates is a common phenomenon in various general election systems in many countries, both in established democratic systems and those currently undergoing a consolidation process or even in authoritarian systems (Noor et al., 2021). Independent and opposition candidates are the main elements of democratic pluralism, especially at the local and regional levels (Ehin & Mihkel 2012; Berg 2009). Many member countries of the Council of Europe in recent decades have adopted regulatory frameworks and general election rules that facilitate independent candidacy, especially in local and

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regional elections where this is an aspiration of high-ranking citizens. However, independent candidates are also increasingly faced with various obstacles.

Thaha and Haryanto (2017) revealed that in the People's Republic of China (PRC), which is known as a communist country with a very strong government position, the practice of nominating independent candidates is implemented by a single party, namely the Chinese Communist Party (PKT). Although opposition parties at the national level are ineligible other than the CCP, independent candidates are allowed or allowed to participate in direct elections at the community congress level in the PRC. With the development of an independent candidate nomination system in a communist country like the PRC, it is predicted that the rise of independent parties or candidates in the world of PRC politics, this means a new hope for democracy in China.

The publication of Constitutional Court Decision No. 5/PUU-V/2007 has opened new horizons in Indonesia, namely, one form of democratization that is developing is the direct regional elections. Not only direct regional elections, regional elections in Indonesia are also open to individual nominations. Regional leadership through individual channels is one form of political development in Indonesia. Citizens at the local level are given alternative choices in selecting regional head candidates who will become leaders in their region. Community participation in regional election contestation is not only attended by regional head candidates from political parties, but also by individual (independent) candidates. The existence of candidates from the individual route is able to provide a new color for voters to be able to choose candidates for regional elections. And also from another point of view, it is an instrument for individuals who have sufficient capability, electability and competence but are not members of a political party.

In line with this, Ehin & Mihkel (2012) stated that independent candidates also have the potential to present a constructive pattern of political party competition and could conversely also lead to destructive goals. Apart from that, Hale (2007) stated that the emergence of independent candidates was considered as a result of the weakness of the existing political party system to accommodate the interests of society or was considered a failure in partisan democracy.

Apart from that, the phenomenon of increasing number of regional election candidates using the individual route indicates a decline in public trust in political parties and feelings of disappointment in candidate pairs promoted by political parties (Nelson 2014). The accumulation of public disappointment with the progress and achievements of political parties in Indonesia, namely the emergence of figures running to become regional head candidates from the individual (independent) pathway, actually provides a breath of fresh air for the community's hopes for a better direction. And pairs of individual candidates provide a variety of alternative choices that encourage wide choices for voters to choose one of them (Habibi & Nurmandi 2021).

In the release of the Indicator Survey which was conducted on all state institutions including political parties. Where, in the survey results, political parties rank at the bottom in the level of public trust, while the results of the indicator survey in 2023 which released the level of public trust placed respectively (1) TNI at 73.50 points; (2) President Joko Widodo with 72.70 points; (3) Prosecutor's Office with 72.70 points; Court of 69.40 points; Police with 63.90 points; Political Parties by 59.00 points; House of Representatives amounted to 58.70 points. Referring to this data, the level of public trust in political parties is getting lower. This is one of the triggers for voters' reluctance to give their voting rights to candidate pairs through political parties. Thus, the phenomenon of individual candidate pairs winning is becoming increasingly popular among voters.

The pair of candidates from the independent or independent route was no less phenomenal in the Regional Head Election for Mayor of Metro Lampung Province, which was participated by Wahdi and Qomaru Zaman as individual (independent) candidates. The fight for individual candidates in the Lampung Province Metro City Pilkada was not easy because they were joined by the pair Anna Morinda and Fritz Akhmad Nuzir who were supported by the PDI Perjuangan and the Democrat Party, where nationally the PDIP was the winner in the 2019 general election and the Democrat party was a "senior" party. " who has won the Presidential Election for two terms. Not only the pair mentioned above, individual candidates Wahdi and Qomaru Zaman also have to compete with pairs from the combined political parties Golkar, PKB and PAN who are supporting Ampian Bustami and Rudy Santoso as well as Ahmad Mufti Salim and Saleh Candra Pahlawan who are being supported by PKS and Nasdem.

However, Wahdi and Qomaru Zaman, as local sons, felt called and were not afraid to face all the candidate pairs put forward by this political party. It is proven from the recapitulation results of the Regional General Election Commission that the pair Wahdi and Qomaru Zaman received that the number of votes received in the KPUD, the pair Wahdi and Qomaru Zaman gained 29.1% percent of the vote.

Referring to the recapitulation results of the Lampung Province Metro City KPUD, pair number 1, Wahdi-Qomaru Zaman, received 29.1% of the votes, narrowly ahead of pair number 4, namely Anna - Fritz, with 27.82% of the total valid votes of 97,082 votes. The phenomenal victory of the candidate pair Wahdi and Qomaru Zaman gave political parties a "hard slap" that 29.1% of the public were dissatisfied with the candidate pair promoted by the political party. This victory also made its own history in Lampung Province, especially Metro City, which produced a winner through the independent route for the first time since the first direct election in 2004.

By including the word "together", Wahdi-Qomaru adheres firmly to this aspect, namely that when there are plans or changes, they don't just do it themselves but always communicate and consult with the Metro City DPRD, so that synergy can be created in turning on the wheels of regional government.

Referring to the explanation above, the author has reason to be interested in researching and analyzing the phenomenon of the regional head election for Metro Mayor which was won by a Candidate Candidate from the Independent route who competed closely with candidates from political parties. And it is also interesting to review the continuity of government after the regional elections, considering that the Metro Mayor was previously elected through political party channels. So with this visualization, the sustainability of government in Metro City is interesting to observe

## **2. Theoretical Background**

Indonesian government is currently working hard to implement Good Governance in order to create an authoritative and clean government. Referring to the dynamic conditions of government administration, Chhotray and Stoker stated "Governance has moved in the last twenty decades from the status of a lost word of the English language to a fashionable and challenging concept in a range of disciplines and research programs. But after two decades of publication and debate it seems appropriate to ask: has it been worth it? We must quickly add that our answer is a definite and clear affirmative: governance theory offers a valuable and challenging dimension to our understanding of our contemporary social, economic, and political world. The substantive chapters that follow will provide support to demonstrate the truth of that statement.

Governance seeks to understand how we construct collective decision making. Its introduction as a term in the debate coincided with a feeling that existing models failed to capture what was happening, and did not provide an appropriate framework for the key issues for reformers. In both politics and economics, established ways of making collective decisions face challenges (Hale 2007). The basic unit of political organization, the nation-state has been challenged by the complexity of social problems, the power of organized interests, and the growing internationalization of interdependence (Haerussaleh & Huda 2021).

Economic capital is the political funds needed by Wahdi and Qomaru and their winning team to finance all stages of the election. The role of economic capital is to drive the political machine which can determine the winning strategy implemented by each candidate and winning team, especially to finance various operational needs for campaign activities (Firmansyah et al., 2022).

The concept of economic capital is in the Marxian tradition. Forms of capital are defined with reference to economic control. The Marxian conception of capital is considered to narrow the view of social movements that occur in society (Junzhi 2010). However, Pierre Bourdieu still considers economic capital important, including the means of production (machines, land, labor), materials (income, objects) and money. The economic model is capital which is directly the most independent and flexible type of capital because economic capital can easily be used or transformed into other domains (Nelson 2014).

According to Pierre Bourdieu, economic capital is a resource that can be a means of production and a financial means. This capital is most easily converted into other capital such as social capital, cultural capital and symbolic capital (legitimacy) (Husain et al., 2023).

### **3. Methodology**

The research design in this study is qualitative research. Qualitative design is used to understand the complexity of the system and to support the intuitive-dialogical thinking process in building social collaboration models and expressing facts through the arguments put forward. The qualitative approach is characterized by in-depth interviews, multiple interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and direct involvement of researchers in the process at the research location to construct or build a model for implementing strategies for winning regional head elections for individual candidates.

### **4. Empirical Findings/Result**

The political dynamics that developed in Metro City in 2020 gave rise to pairs of candidates through the individual (independent) route. By looking at the modalities of individual candidate pairs in the Metro City regional elections in 2020, the regional head election contestation through independent channels is a good trend to pay attention to. For example, in the Metro City Regional Head Election, those who contested on an independent route were able to achieve victory, even though they were surrounded by competitors from political party candidates. The election of Regional Head for Mayor of Metro Lampung Province, which was participated by Wahdi and Qomaru Zaman as independent candidates, was interesting to observe and analyze using the Bourdieu theoretical approach which prioritizes 3 (three) main capital, namely: 1) Political Capital; 2) Social Capital; 3) Economic Capital.

#### **Political Capital Analysis**

It cannot be denied that the political activities of all candidate pairs before declaring themselves to run for regional election contests have maneuvers or movements that can be seen or not seen. Observing this, Wahdi, as a candidate pair using the individual route, saw an opportunity to be able to move as an individual. This is as stated by Informant 1, namely as follows: "In my opinion, the first is that in regional elections it can certainly be supported by political parties or independent channels, secondly it has its own consequences. From my personal point of view, I was first born in a metro city, and I am a civil servant and have activities related to society, a doctor and lecturer. There are personal activities for myself in society and my role as members of society. Well, this is the capital. Looking at the constellation at that time, I actually never thought about political constellations. Even though I have been asked since 2010, at that time I was asked to accompany several candidates. Well, of course I did that based on instructions from people who asked me. But I also thought again. So, to be precise, in 2019, I started to think there was an opportunity to build my hometown. And there are several parties that are approaching. However, I got more or less 15,000

supports for me. As well as support from several mass organizations. Third, I think it cannot be separated from what was done by several survey institutions, I think the independent vote was around 30 percent. Based on all of that, I saw opportunities and political support and carried out political activities. Since then I have worked hard to form all forms of support, as well as introducing myself, forming a team, looking after the team at the polling station."

Since the publication of Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 7 of 2014 concerning General Elections, one of which has regulated the election of regional heads, namely Governor, Deputy Governor, Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Regent and Deputy Regent directly and can be through political party and non-political party channels ( individual). Wahdi in his statement above stated that he had not thought about being able to nominate or register as regional head for Metro Mayor. However, a wave of political support often emerges to provide support, namely that a number of political parties have approached and penetrated to be able to nominate Wahdi as a participant in the regional election contestation in Metro City in 2010. However, this was of course not immediately accepted by Wahdi, even though this support came from major political parties such as PDI-P, Gerindra and PAN.

In response to this, Wahdi, who at that time still had the status of a civil servant, continued to make consistent efforts to serve the community. Wahdi, as one of the best sons of Metro City, continues to communicate intensively and consistently with the community. This is done solely because Wahdi wants to know what the community expects and needs from leaders. Therefore, even though the support comes from political parties which are considered quite large, Wahdi does not want to be careless in making decisions to be able to contest in the world of politics. One of Wahdi's considerations in order to be involved in the world of politics is to look at, pay attention to and analyze existing survey institutions.

Even though there is a lot of support for Wahdi and Qomaru, this does not necessarily make this individual couple become arrogant or arrogant. This pair chose to continue waiting for any political steps to be taken. The Wahdi-Qomaru couple really took mature steps in the sense of not being careless in determining their political direction. The presence of quite large support from the community was built thanks to Wahdi's positive reputation as a doctor. Wahdi in this case was able to maximize his competence as a doctor, as a public servant during the Covid-19 pandemic with regulations that did not allow mass gatherings, open campaigns and gathering people at a certain point.

### **Social Capital Analysis**

The social capital developed by Wahdi-Qomaru is sought to be invested to obtain political support from various groups. Candidate pairs take advantage of the trust given by the public when participating in regional election contestations. The social relationships that develop in the Wahdi-Qomaru pair are as important as other capital. Informant 1 emphasized that: "Sometimes people wait and wait for the leader that the community wants. So what strengthens us is our strategy to approach the community, and this social capital must be carried out continuously so that the community does

not forget that, even now I still continue to carry out this social capital. As an officer and owner of a private hospital that specializes in mothers and children, I have carried out many activities, such as my P2KPKR, where I have also been deputy chairman of PKBI for 10 years, so I have provided a lot of education and services to the community, such as free family planning, free circumcision, milk, implants etc. The embedded social values have often been implemented and are still continuing today. I see that this community wants to continue to be sustainable before becoming a regional leader. And that must be continued and continued, for my socialization it is very long (history) so the public wants this to continue. Providing good service.”

In fact, the regional election contestation is not just about looking for a regional head, but also the voting community hopes and really longs for the birth of a leader who can bring change to society. The change that society hopes for must of course come from a leader who truly cares about his people. So it is possible that the elected leader will carry out his duties and promises to build a good and complete environment according to his term of office. In this regard, the Wahdi-Qomaru pair is seen as a figure who can accommodate all the concerns that the people of Metro City have been feeling.

The flow of support provided by various parties is certainly put to good use by the Wahdi-Qomaru couple to continue building relationships or networks in the community. With the building of this relationship, Wahdi-Qomaru was faced with the reality that the people of Metro City longed for a regional figure or figure who could really pay attention to them. Therefore, trust with social support must be maintained continuously and sustainably. Because this also has an influence on voting on election day, this is as stated by Informant 2, namely: "Social capital is very influential, if candidates are from outside the metro it is very difficult to socialize. If the candidate is from the bureaucratic side, it is because they are already known, because they have interacted with the community. If you are not a bureaucrat, you have to introduce yourself for socialization to nominate. The candidate's integrity must be good, their behavior, their way of social life."

Some of the advantages or advantages that Wahdi has are that he truly is a native, namely a figure who was born and raised in Metro City. The soul's call to build the city of birth was moved from deep within the figure of Wahdi, this is what the people of Metro City caught on to provide support to this individual couple. Apart from that, the figure of Wahdi, who is a state servant (ASN), is a figure who is easily recognized in society (familiar), so that Wahdi's figure is already well-known among the public.

### **Economic Capital Analysis**

Economic capital support for the prospective Wahdi-Qomaru candidate pair has the most dominating capital role in Wahdi-Qomaru's efforts to fulfill the minimum requirements for support for his candidacy in the 2020 Metro City regional elections. Fulfilling the minimum requirements for support clearly requires large costs and is also used to build relationships with supporters, including being used to mobilize support during the lead-up to and ongoing candidacy of Wahdi-Qomaru through the individual route. Wahdi-Qomaru's economic capital is the support of economic power that is owned in the form of political funds (money), which can be seen through aspects

of its acquisition and the use of company ownership status as support in building trust in society. The support of economic capital means that other capital can be used optimally for the Wahdi-Qomaru candidate pair.

Questions that can be raised are regarding how much the candidate pair uses personal funds when participating in regional election contests. As stated by the informant, namely: "The people in Metro City are known as people whose money politics is high, but in reality this is not the case. Actually, metro people are very smart, there are still those who take advantage of this, but it's not absolute. Yes, all candidates will definitely take advantage of this, but the biggest ones are social capital, economic culture and strategy. But being independent is a very large amount of capital and uses up energy, for example we just pay the witnesses ourselves, for example 1 witness costs 300 thousand without consumption. So I think there must be a change in political costs. So regional head candidates must be truly prepared for political costs. I think the public understands that, well the public must also understand this. Some candidates definitely want to win after preparing for a long time with large capital. Society needs to be tolerant, that's a big value for regional head candidates. At that time it was allowed according to the regulations."

In preparing himself to take part in the 2020 Metro City regional elections, Wahdi-Qomaru certainly has prepared himself with the economic capital he has. By noting that the level of money politics circulating in Metro City is very high, this has not been proven. However, what each pair needs to pay attention to is that with preparation for each witness assigned to each polling station, they will be given a minimum honorarium of Rp. 300,000 (three hundred thousand rupiah). The large witness fees are an illustration that becoming a regional head requires a high level of economic capital preparation as well. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account really carefully to determine oneself in the regional election event.

A different opinion expressed by the Informant was: "The financial strength of the community is weak, so there are people who are interested in being invited to do money politics, as far as I know the amount starts from 200 to 350 thousand, depending on who is brave." This opinion illustrates that even though money politics is not justified, there are still regional head candidates who do these things. Especially carried out ahead of voting day (D-1). The practice of money politics seems to have become an entrenched habit and is very, very difficult to stop or eliminate.

The public views the practice of money politics that occurs in regional election contestations as something that is normal and occurs in almost all regions. Lack of education and understanding of the dangers of money politics practices has led to the spread and proliferation of these illegal practices. And whatever the reason, the practice of money politics is not condoned by anyone. In line with this, Informant 2 also emphasized the high political costs, namely "if you don't have the economy, you don't need to run, because the political costs are very large. In terms of introduction and operations to the community, the amount must be taken into account."



This confirmation shows that once again, if the candidates participating in the regional elections really have to have very strong financial strength. Because of the very high political costs of the direct general election system, namely having to prepare campaign props, crowding, consumption, renting a place, and so on. Therefore, it cannot be denied that it is almost impossible for people with reasonable economic strength to participate in the Pilkada. However, regional election participants must be able to complete a campaign finance report, as stated by Informant 3, namely: "First they submit a campaign finance report, which reports the beginning of the funds and the end of the campaign funds. The need for the 2020 regional elections is quite large, with the rule that campaign materials can only be shared, plus the distribution of medical equipment (masks, hand sanitizers), this has changed costs. Payment for witnesses, buying campaign materials (political costs that must be borne by the candidate pair). "If there is political money, it is difficult to prove... only numbers appear in society."

Based on the audit results of campaign finance reports for participants in the 2020 general election for mayor and deputy mayor, pair number 1, namely Dr. Wahdi, Sp.Og and Drs. Qomaru Zaman, M.A. which has been audited by the Muhammad Adi Public Accounting Firm which has been assigned by the Metro City KPU based on Contract Agreement Letter number: 54/RT.01.1-SPK/1872/Sek-Kot/XII/2020, to carry out an Assurance Engagement with adequate confidence and provide an opinion regarding compliance with the Candidate Pair's Campaign Fund Report, Dr. Wahdi, Sp.Og and Drs. Qomaru Zaman, M.A. The audit results provide an opinion that the Assertion of the Candidate Pair, Dr. Wahdi, Sp.Og and Drs. Qomaru Zaman, M.A. in the Campaign Fund Report, in material terms, it has fulfilled the applicable criteria as regulated in KPU Regulation No. 12 of 2020 concerning Amendments to KPU Regulation no. 5 of 2017 concerning Campaign Funds for Election Participants for Governor and Deputy Governor, Regent and Deputy Regent, and/or Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

## **5. Discussions**

The political dynamics in Metro City during the 2020 regional elections highlighted the significance of independent candidates, specifically the Wahdi-Qomaru Zaman pair, who emerged victorious despite facing competition from established political party candidates. This success can be analyzed through Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, which emphasizes the roles of political, social, and economic capital in political contests.

Wahdi's maneuvering as an independent candidate underscores the importance of political capital, which encompasses the ability to garner political support and navigate the political landscape effectively. As noted, Wahdi's background as a civil servant and his involvement in community activities significantly contributed to his political capital. His strategic decision to run independently, despite offers from major political parties, illustrates his adeptness at leveraging his political capital to gain an advantage. This finding aligns with Nurak and Wardani's (2021) analysis of

independent candidates in East Nusa Tenggara, where candidate factors such as personal reputation and community involvement played crucial roles in their success.

Social capital, defined by the networks and relationships that facilitate collective action, was crucial for Wahdi and Qomaru. Their extensive community engagement and reputation as service providers built a reservoir of trust and goodwill, which translated into electoral support. This is supported by the experiences in the Pangandaran Regency election, where Solihah et al. (2018) highlighted that strong social connections and community involvement were pivotal for the Jeje-Adang candidate pair. Similarly, Wahdi's continuous community engagement, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, reinforced his social capital, making him a familiar and trusted figure in Metro City.

Economic capital, involving the financial resources necessary for campaigning, was also a decisive factor in the Wahdi-Qomaru candidacy. Despite high political costs, including campaign materials and witness fees, their ability to mobilize sufficient funds demonstrated the critical role of economic resources in independent candidacies. This mirrors findings from Rahman (2004) and Supriatna and Yassin (2013), which emphasized the substantial financial investments required for successful local election campaigns. Additionally, the acknowledgment of high money politics practices, although not as dominant in Metro City, indicates that economic capital is indispensable for covering various campaign-related expenses.

The success of the Wahdi-Qomaru pair in Metro City's regional elections exemplifies how independent candidates can leverage political, social, and economic capital to compete effectively against party-affiliated contenders. This case study resonates with Thaha and Haryanto's (2017) research on independent candidates in South Sulawesi, which highlighted the strategic importance of these forms of capital in achieving electoral success.

Moreover, the analysis of nonverbal communication in negotiation by Thompson et al. (2017) can be extended to political campaigns, where candidates' public personas and interactions significantly influence voter perceptions and trust. The independent candidates' ability to connect with voters through nonverbal cues and consistent community presence underscores the nuanced role of social capital in political contests.

## **6. Conclusions**

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, the author can draw conclusions from the results of this research, namely: 1) The victory of the individual candidate pair in the 2020 regional election contestation in Metro City, which was analyzed by referring to Bourdie's Capital Theory, is still felt to be less than optimal, because the individual candidate pair did not receive political support from political actors in Metro City. Political Capital Theory is seen as very weak. As a form of real strategy, each individual candidate pair must have Reputation Capital as the main capital for

candidate pairs through the individual route; 2) The continuity of government after the victory of individual candidate pairs with minimal support from Legislative Members can implement a persuasive communication approach strategy by prioritizing Community of People, Attempted Influence, Beliefs, Values and Attitude as the main foundation for running government.

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