

## Gender Politics and Political Strategies of Female Candidate in Lampung Province, Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT:**

Female politicians in Indonesia are still facing social discrimination when running for election as regional leaders or legislative members. Some of them succeeded in overcoming those challenges, while others still find it difficult. This article studied the implemented strategy by the female political candidate in Lampung province, when facing social discrimination during her candidacy. This case study used in-depth interviews with prominent political figures, observations and documentation. The result showed that the female candidate during the Lampung governor election maximised her social network, apart from other factors that helped her win the election with her political pair. To overcome social barriers and discrimination, a female political candidate should use many strategies, including the extensive use of social media to win the majority of votes.

**Keywords:** *gender politics; general election; local election; political strategies.*

**ABSTRAK:**

Para politisi perempuan di Indonesia masih menghadapi diskriminasi sosial saat mencalonkan diri sebagai kepala daerah atau maju sebagai anggota legislatif. Beberapa dari mereka berhasil mengatasi tantangan tersebut, sementara yang lain masih merasa kesulitan. Artikel ini mengkaji strategi yang diterapkan oleh calon politik perempuan di Provinsi Lampung, ketika menghadapi diskriminasi sosial selama pencalonannya. Studi kasus ini menggunakan wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh politik terkemuka, observasi dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa caleg perempuan pada Pemilihan Gubernur (Pilgub) Lampung memaksimalkan jejaring sosialnya, terlepas dari faktor lain yang membantunya memenangkan pilkada bersama pasangan politiknya. Untuk mengatasi hambatan sosial dan diskriminasi, seorang kandidat politik perempuan harus menggunakan banyak strategi, termasuk penggunaan media sosial secara ekstensif untuk memenangkan suara mayoritas.

**Keywords:** *politik gender; pemilihan umum; pemilihan lokal; strategi politik.*

## INTRODUCTION

As a country with the fourth-largest population in the world, Indonesia is home to 266.79 million people. The female population reached 131.47 million, almost similar to the male population. Yet, judging from the welfare and accessibility aspect, Indonesia still has a lot of work to do to solve the gender disparity problem.

The World Economic Forum gender gap index considers four main factors for gender gap, namely participation and opportunities in economic aspects, education levels and access to health and political participation. From the mentioned fields, the education gap still needs more attention from the government because it exhibits the lowest score. However, Indonesia has been praised for its literacy rate as one of the highest in Asia, yet this indicator cannot be used as the sole reference. The ABC gap between Indonesian women and men seems to be a complex problem, Other than being influenced by the high number of young females dropping out from primary level in schools, forced to work and getting married early, another factor that widens the education gap is the social stigma towards highly educated women. This is further exacerbated by a large number of regulations that discriminate against women at both local and national levels. Data from Komnas Perempuan (Women National Commission) at the end of 2018 stated that there were 421 policies limiting women's activities, including 56% of local regulations, the rest were in the form of circular letters from regional heads from the provincial to the village level.

The number of discriminatory regulations is not separated from the low quantity of decision-makers coming from the same gender. It is a given fact that women's participation in Indonesian politics is still very low. During the election for the regional head last year, the percentage of women who volunteered to be leaders was only 6.9%. This figure is down by 0.3% compared to the previous election in 2015. From the minimum affirmation quota of the existing policy (30% of total seats), the percent-

age of women holding executive and legislative seats at the national level has not significantly increased since ABC and has shown no upward movement over the years. The following graphs are processed from the General Election Commission (KPU) about the percentage of female representatives in the parliament (Figure 1).

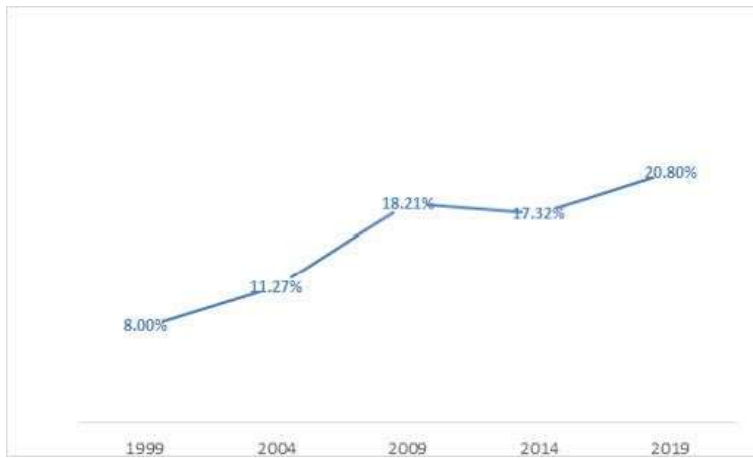


FIGURE 1. PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN THE INDONESIAN PARLIAMENT  
Source: The General Electoral Commission, 2019

The condition of women’s political participation at the regional level is not that different. One example comes from the South Sumatra Province; as seen from the members of the Regional People’s Representative Council (DPRD), there are only 13 women councillors from a total of 75 or around 17.23%. This is inversely proportional to the women voters’ participation, which is quite high at 78%. In the view of this phenomenon, the representatives of the South Sumatra DPRD stated that working together is good for the government, political parties and KPU to provide particular socialisation and regeneration for women to encourage their roles in the political sphere. Moreover, the role of women is expected to be much broader in the future; further they can demonstrate a greater influence on the formulation and implementation of regulations at regional and national levels as

many public policies intersect closely with women's basic rights.

There number of women representatives at the parliament and the executive level is quite low. However, there is a problem in the way affirmative policies are being implemented. This is caused by the patriarchal culture and various stigmas that are still dominant in Indonesia. Even in the candidacy and campaigning of female candidates, it is not uncommon for personal issues, which are not related to work programmes and her vision and mission, to tackle their participation toward policies that exhibit a direct impact on the welfare of women.

This gender bias in politics was also discovered when the Lampung vice governor candidate, who was also the Regent of East Lampung, Chusnunia Chalim participated in a five-year political contestation. When Chusnunia and Arinal were about to register as candidates for the position of governor, the unmarried status of Chusnunia was questioned by the public. The research by ([Cassese and Holman 2018](#)) concluded that the popularity of female candidates is usually affected by their personal lives, and it further decreases due to the public's interference in personal matters. In contrast to these findings, in the case of local elections in Lampung province, the impact of the negative campaign that attacked Chusnunia was not remarkable. In the latest release from the KPU, the pair was later declared as the elected pair of governors and deputy governors in Lampung province. The challenges faced by women who are actively involved in politics include sexual harassment, discrimination and marginalisation ([Mlambo and Kapingura 2019](#)).

A study by Sundström and Wängnerud (2016) examined how European women face difficulty in overcoming social barriers and political regulation, which further illustrate the obstacles faced by women in political activities. Additionally, ([Mangkurat et al. 2020](#); [White and Aspinall 2019](#)) conducted a study on women's engagement in politics at the parliament level of Indonesia, revealing discrimination in the right of inquiry and political compromise. Furthermore, the study found that the cause of

the discriminatory behaviour is a culture that developed in Indonesia where women were considered only as *Wingking Konco*, or people behind the scene; women were expected to play a role behind the political stage.

Historically, Indonesia's political and military maps tend to be androcentric in nature, which causes women to be increasingly marginalised as '*the second sex.*' A change began to show after the fall of the New Order regime. Women's political activities and spaces in Indonesia began to thrive along with the collapse of the New Order regime. Various women's organisations with various bases of struggle began to be established. Likewise, mid-level political parties began to show interest in adding a special structure in their organisations or organisational wings based on women's participation.

From the previous research that shows the 'black campaign' to weaken female politicians' position ([Cassese & Holman 2018](#)), we found that their conclusion cannot always be the case. In the 2018 Lampung Election, a female political candidate could win the majority of votes and win the election. Therefore, this study is conducted to find the candidates' strategies for the election. Besides, the findings from this research could provide new insight into how female politicians should act toward negative propaganda during their candidacy. By interviewing some key actors in Lampung province, the results are expected to gain a deeper understanding of how gender politics plays its role in the governor race in one of the provinces in Indonesia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS

Representation refers to how a person, a group, an idea or a particular opinion is displayed in any media. Several studies based on women's representation in political institutions are interesting to consider. Some of them view that the institution's form exhibits an influence. It is proven that the likelihood of women being elected increases when the institutional 'prestige' is lower

([Goodnow, Madrid, and Moser 2019](#)). In this context, they view that women's electability level as mayors is high, if elected through the representative institutions rather than being directly elected.

On another aspect, there is also a view regarding the influence of prestige, as measured by electoral arrangements such as the *district* (electoral system) or *at large* (elected by the entire electoral population without electoral districts), to the election of women to fill the seats in the city council. Some researchers found that women demonstrate a greater probability of being selected if using a district system ([White and Aspinall 2019](#)), whereas two studies did not find a correlation between the probability of women being elected in the electoral system ([Christensen and Bardall 2014](#)). In their respective studies, they did not find any correlations of other institutional factors such as salary, length of office and seat size with the high or low level of women's representation.

If explored further, not all institutional factors demonstrate the same effect on all women. For example, in the ([Charlotte, 2016](#)), researchers found that district selection reduced white women's level of electability, which was inversely proportional to Latin and black women. Meanwhile, the study by ([Brown, 2018](#)) found that black women presented with a higher degree of selectivity in the district system than women of Asian and Latin descent. These studies indicate that there is a cross between the institutional factors and the background of female candidates.

Apart from these studies, research on women and politics has been carried out in many countries. ([Craske, 2003](#)), in his research in Latin America, introduces a new concept called '*political motherhood*' that depicts the existence of women's political development being increasingly acknowledged as actively participating in various lines. However, not all businesses went well in their development. In their research, White and ([Aspinall, 2019](#)) identified several obstacles that are often faced by women politicians in Indonesia:

1. Individual constraints in the form of limited education and

experience: Since the beginning of the democratic regime in Indonesia, politics and political organisation have always been understood as a world of men. This image is so strong that politics always exhibits a face appearance and lifestyle of a man. Thus, women who enter this area always get negative attention and are even stigmatised for appearing to be ambitious and seemingly unscrupulous.

2. Structural constraints: The assumption that women are not capable of politics and organisation because women do not demonstrate similar political rights to men. Besides, most women are unable to garner the support of their husbands and family. Further, they lack confidence because they do not have the support of their community.
3. Cultural flames: Generally, women are still burdened by traditional roles and duties. Women are double burden-bearers; they are forced to become a mother or a wife or a daughter who must take care of their family. So, it is considered inappropriate if they are involved in politics or organising a movement, particularly in traditional Muslim communities within Indonesia.
4. Women are seen to be less capable of being a leader because they are falsely believed to be more emotional than men. The public and religious views in Indonesia about the position of women, especially regarding gender relations, are very distorted and biased.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study was carried out using a case study research model. Lampung province was selected since the woman candidates from this region gained the most significant vote share and left the incumbent behind for the first time. This achievement increased women's representation in politics, which was below the minimum quota in Lampung province. The Lampung case is also unique in Indonesia as it presents small female parliament members, but it could have a female candidate that won majority votes.

The study was conducted from March 1 to June 20 of 2019. The in-depth interviews were conducted with nine key informants from and beyond local governments, political parties; it also included experts in gender politics who work for the government and in NGOs (Table 1). The interviews addressed the role of gender politics in governor contestation, as well as the strategies of the woman candidates struggling against misogyny to win the governor election. The secondary data from the local regulations, the provincial grand design of the general election and the reports on the election activities and women empowerment were also considered. The triangulation technique was used to validate the data.

TABLE 1. LIST OF RESPONDENTS AND QUESTIONS

No.	Respondent Categories	Questions Topic
1.	Local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Election situation</li> <li>• Regional characteristics</li> <li>• Lampung's current situation (politics and economic situation)</li> </ul>
2.	Political parties and campaign team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campaign strategies</li> <li>• Election situation</li> <li>• Gender politics in Lampung</li> </ul>
3.	Gender politics experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chusnunia's profile</li> <li>• Gender politics in Lampung</li> </ul>

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### THE PORTRAIT OF GENDER IN LAMPUNG PROVINCE

Lampung province is relatively balanced when viewing the ratio of male and female population. The population in Lampung province in 2017 was 8.289.577 people, where the male population was 4.247.121 people (51%) and the female was 4.042.456 people (49%). The population distribution in each regency/city is also very diverse. From the most populous in Central Lampung Regency with 1.261.498 people to the least in the West Pesisir

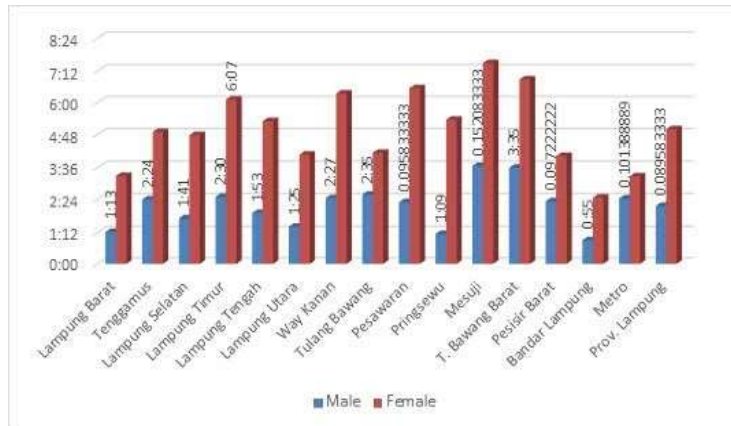


Regency with 152.529 people. In terms of sex ratio, Lampung is a province with a relatively good parity of 105.06 compared to the World Sex Ratio, which ranges around 103 to 107.

Apart from the quantitative data above, various studies on gender are currently underway. They indicate that equality and fairness, related to the roles of men and women, are still an interesting central issue to study. In various fields, including education, livelihood and so on, many problems are still to be found that indicate the need for significant efforts to reduce and eliminate the gap.

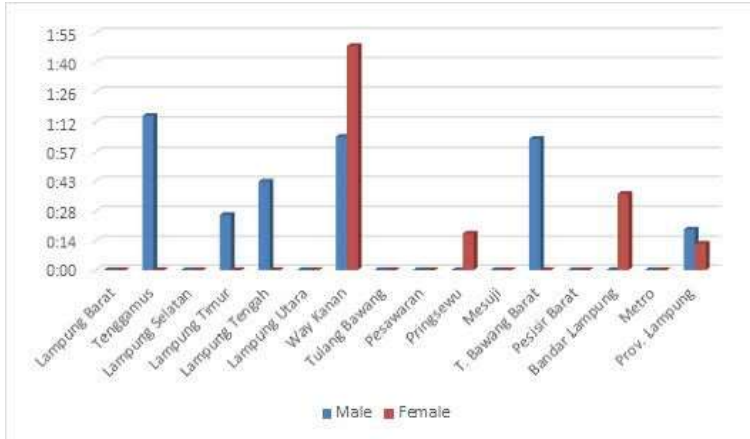
An aspect that still reflects a gender gap in Lampung province is education. One indicator in this aspect is based on the ability to read and write for residents in the age group of 15 and above (Figure 2). However, the women representation in the legislative body is still less than 30%, as shown in Figure 3.

FIGURE 2. ILLITERACY PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION AGED OVER 15 YEARS BY REGENCY/CITY, GENDER IN LAMPUNG PROVINCE YEAR 2017



Source: Lampung Province Government, 2019

FIGURE 3. PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION AGED 15-24 YEARS BY REGENCY/CITY, GENDER, AND READING AND WRITING ABILITY IN LAMPUNG PROVINCE YEAR 2017



Source: Lampung Province Government, 2019

The elections in 2019, for the Lampung Provincial Legislative Members period of 2019 to 2024, resulted in 85 people elected as legislators, assigned to the Lampung Provincial KPU Decree No. 316/PL.01.1-BA/03/Prov/VIII/2019. Based on Figure 3 above, men dominate the seats with 67 legislators (79%), while women occupy only 18 positions (21 %). Among the political parties, only PDIP, PKB and Nasdem reached the 30% seats quota for women; others are below the standard. Even some parties, such as PKS, PAN and PPP, do not have women representatives for the provincial legislature. Based on the data above, the gender inequalities for women in literacy and employment (included in the legislature) are still a challenge.

## THE GENDER POLITICS IN LAMPUNG GOVERNOR ELECTION

The studies on gender, which is discussed frequently even today, indicate that equality and fairness regarding the roles of men and women is still a central issue. In a lot of fields, including education, employment, etc., inequality is still the main problem, which needs a significant effort to reduce and eliminate the gap. In the political sphere, women's representation in parlia-

ment is still less than the minimum quota of 30 %. The dominant culture of patriarchy in Lampung is one of the reasons that best explains this inequality. Women are still considered ineligible to be political leaders. The 2015 Lampung province election solidified the initial appearance of women as political leaders. They were successfully elected as public officials in the executive branch, such as Winarti as the Regent of Tulang Bawang, Chusnunia as the Regent of East Lampung, Dewi Handajani as the Regent of Tanggamus and Erlina as the Vice Regent of Pesisir Barat. While at the provincial level, the unexpired term of Lampung Regent, Chusnunia occupied the position of vice governor in the 2018 election. This achievement crowned her as the first woman to win the provincial level election in Lampung (Decree of the Lampung Provincial Election Commission No. 373 / HK.03.1-Kept / 18 / Prov / VII / 2018).

TABLE 2. THE CANDIDATE'S VOTE ACQUISITION FOR GOVERNOR AND VICE GOVERNOR OF LAMPUNG, 2019–2024 PERIOD

No. (1)	Name Candidates for Governor and Deputy Governor (2)	Vote Acquisition (3)
1.	H. Muhammad Ridho Ficardo, S.Pi, M.Si Basri Bachtiar, SH., MM	1.043.666
2.	Drs. H. Herman Hasanusi, MM Ir. Sutono, MM	1.054.646
3.	Ir. Arinal Djunaidi Hj. Chusnunia, PhD.	1.548.506
4.	Dr. H. Mustafa H. Ahmad Jajuli, S.IP., M.Si	452.454
<b>Total</b>		<b>4.099.272</b>

Although women politicians started to show their presence in the political stage in Lampung, Chusnunia's victory in the Lampung province election in 2018 could not be separated from various issues that targeted her personal life. Even the issue began to surface since her nomination as East Lampung Regent. Personal attacks are carried out by people who claimed to be the members of the Public Information Services Authority (LP3RI)

Non-governmental Organisation (NGO), which questioned the status of Chusnunia's child since Chusnunia herself had not been married.

This action of demonstrators was suspected to be politically motivated to harm Chusnunia's credibility. In response to this demonstration, Chusnunia stressed that political opponents should not reduce her lack of marriage and her child as political commodities and reminded that protests should be directed toward those who abandon children, not to herself who adopted a child. This problem eventually made the Indonesian Child Protection Agency (LPAI) accompanying the East Lampung Regent to report the LP3RI to the police. The complaint of LPAI was in the context of the alleged exploitation of children carried out by the LP3RI demonstrators who put up the picture of the child as an object for demonstration. Additionally, LPAI East Lampung considered that Chusnunia's adopted child, AJ, had experienced social exploitation.

### **THE FEMALE CANDIDATE'S CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES IN ADDRESSING WOMEN ISSUES**

The government is trying to encourage public participation for political development ever since a democratic system was adopted in Indonesia. One of the efforts was to implement an affirmative action policy in which political parties are required to have a minimum of 30 % of women in the list of candidates involved in both executive and legislative elections. With this condition, a conventional system that is used as the only subordinate to the ideology and interests of the ruling party had to switch to the democratic system. The changing system forced the party machine to actively move on to acquire votes from the grassroots. Therefore, party management tend to set policies and specific strategies before the election to gain as many votes as possible ([Muhtadi, 2019](#)). This is called political marketing, where a coalition party exploits any possible strategy to take and reach many votes ([Simbolon, 2016](#)).

The political strategy is simply that political parties should stand shoulder to shoulder with candidates and think and plan on how to achieve their goals ([Mufti, 2019](#)). The decision making was affected by some essential factors, namely the local culture, local history and the resources owned by competitors, etc.

Furthermore, ([Nielsen, 2011](#)) in his article entitled ‘Three faces of political marketing strategy’ stated that the term political strategy should be defined not only from one point of view but from various dimensions: from the design, interpretation and significance. These dimensions should consider the actors, the political environment, the purpose of adopted strategy and the possibility of conflicts that will be encountered if a policy plan is implemented. Referring to the complexity and the vastness of this definition, hereinafter, in the discussion and analysis, Nielsen’s theory is used as a reference in describing how the strategy is undertaken by the elected governor and vice governor of Lampung in response to the stigma and issues of woman empowerment.

Interestingly, Lampung province is dominated by the Javanese community, instead of the native inhabitants of Lampung. So, the assumption exists that a majority of voters in Lampung demonstrate similar characteristics to the Javanese voters, especially Central Java, East Java and Yogyakarta. Lampung’s openness in accepting people from outside is also reflected in how the community is very receptive to their women leaders. Although the trend of women leadership in Lampung province is ‘new,’ as it happened over the last six to seven years, the trend is moving more and more toward women taking part in the political sphere. Chusnunia, the elected vice governor in the 2018 local elections, became the first female leader in Lampung province to win the position of the East Lampung Regent. From this, it can be seen that the rise of women leaders in a region was able to trigger other women to be more interested in politics.

The Lampung elections for the position of governor presented four candidates, namely M. Ridho Ficardo-Bachtiar Basri, Herman HN-Sutono, Arinal Djunaidi-Chusnunia Chalim and

Ahmad Mustafa-Jajuli. In the final results announced by the Election Commission of Lampung Province, the elected pair was Arinal-Chusnunia, with 1,584,506 votes or 37.78 % of the total ballots. However, the candidate number 1, who was the incumbent pair, gained 25.46 % of votes, equivalent to 1,043,666. A similar percentage was obtained by candidate number 2, Herman HN-Sutono with 25.73 % or 1,054,646 votes. In the last position, Mustafa-Jajuli only got 11.04 % or 454,452 votes.

The victory gained by pair number 3 was not predicted by many political analysts. At the beginning of the campaign, some even assumed that pair number 4 and the incumbent candidates would gain a lot of votes. However, in the subsequent developments, candidate number 3, who was supported by the PKS party, was caught red-handed by the KPK (Corruption Eradication Commission), which changed the political map before the elections took place. The political turmoil then increased the probability of other candidates to gain a much higher vote share, including the elected candidate.

### **THE ROADMAP STRATEGIC DESIGN**

In any elections, the right political strategy design will assist the candidates in gaining the highest vote. Therefore, some basic principles that need to be considered by the bearer parties and 'TIMSES' (campaign team), such as positioning, branding, segmenting with media and non-media strategy, should be well-prepared.

Based on the interviews with the core campaign team, both from Golkar and PKB, the positioning strategy of Arinal and Chusnunia had been applied after the parties declared them as a pair of candidates whom they support. As the only pair with a female figure, they positioned the party to be able to scoop up the votes of women and young female voters. The pair also benefited from the Chusnunia's background, who was the daughter of a famous kyai (expert in Islam) in Lampung. It could help them to gain votes, especially from the pilgrims' recitation and

Nahdlatul Ulama/Revival of the Ulama (NU) organisation. The political positioning method performed by political parties can be broadly divided into the following steps: (1) determining the voter segments, (2) setting the priorities approach and (3) preparing the campaign issue.

The provincial election in Lampung was quite competitive, so it required a comprehensive and effective strategy along with its interpretation. With the right interpretation of the right plan, it is usually expected to maximise the vote acquisition opportunities in densely populated areas. At this stage, the interpretation does not only mean the activity's implementation, but also the focus on the consistency of campaign teams in maximising resources and the preparation of the campaign's programme priorities.

Apart from campaign consistency, another strategy is the division of duties among the winning teams for effective and targeted campaigns. It is understood that social media in Lampung still demonstrated a small impact on the campaign. One study indicated a unique principle in the consistency of the campaign by using 'hashtag' to promote and voice any programme of the party or candidate ([Herdiansah 2019](#); [Wauters, Thijssen, and Erkel 2020](#)).

The consistency and effectiveness of communication were also applied by Chusnunia and the winning team while approaching the voters. With a focus on programme promotion and strengthening her female characters, this campaign method is far more effective and striking in the public mind. Besides, she benefited as the only female candidate in the election; it made it easier for the public to remember her. Notably, the winning team demonstrated no hesitation in highlighting the Chusnunia's femininity. Although she had been buffeted by rumours related to the child adoption and her unmarried status, Chusnunia's firm and calm demeanour was visible to the public, making people trust what she said, rather than the rumours. In addition to the team's consistency and hard work in promoting the candidates, the

programme prioritisation was based on the demographic profile of the region, which was dominated by small farmers, traders and fishers. Arinal-Chusnunia introduced pro-poor programmes.

## CONCLUSION

The race for the position of governor in Lampung province has shown that there were many factors that affected the final votes, including the impact of the effective campaign strategies to gain popular votes, especially which target the swing voters in the province. An additional point was given to Chusnunia's success in building the public's political trust. This can be seen from her strategies, both before the campaign period and during, which were her showing respect to the political opponents and using social media platforms to gain attention from the younger generations. Some significant aspects that made Chusnunia acceptable among others were effective political communication, strong social networks, the building loyalty among the masses and the well-designed prioritisation of campaign targets.

The victory of Chusnunia and Arinal in the provincial political election in Lampung, besides being a new milestone in the local politics of gender, also sparked other women figures to be involved in politics. However, most of them belong to privileged and politically influential families.

As for the implications, several ways are required to keep the gender politics in Lampung region stable, such as the following:

- 1) Encouraging other women political figures who demonstrate leadership capacities to participate in executive, legislative and judiciary bodies;
- 2) Enhancing the political abilities of women, the local governments need to run outreach programs and intensify their political education so that the women are elected not just because of their mere physical superiority;
- 3) Political parties should be more serious in internal regeneration, particularly in the recruitment and development of independent women candidates, so that they exhibit equal per-



sistence to engage in political contestation and to serve the community

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