

WOMEN'S EXPANSION IN REGIONAL HEAD ELECTIONS IN MEDAN CITY 2020 (CASE STUDY ON THE AKHYAR-SALMAN COUPLE)

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ABSTRACT. The role of women as political elites is increasingly important, which makes gender inequality widespread. This study examines the expansion, role, and contribution of DPD women of the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) in the 2020 Medan City regional head elections with a case study on the Akhyar-Salman couple. Qualitative research was conducted by collecting data on the role of female PKS party members and leaders in winning the Akhyar-Salman pair through in-depth interviews with research subjects. sample determination using a purposive sampling technique. All data were processed descriptively. The results showed that the expansion of women in improving the quality and quantity of regional elections in Medan City is significant; this is indicated by the contribution of women's political elites in mobilizing the implementation of campaigns in the community and attracting public interest from upstream to downstream to introduce the Akhyar-Salman couple. Women's political elites have functions and responsibilities in winning candidate pairs through door-to-door campaigns to each household, creating work programs that attract women to join, such as carrying out women's recitation (*dakwah*), helping communities affected by disasters, and carrying out approaches to the ulama. In addition, the most prominent expansion of women lies in the gender equality program and equal access to information, which have the most decisive influence on the campaign process. The work program launched by the mayoral and deputy candidate pairs is the result of preliminary studies of the community and data collection by the DPD PKS women's political elites. Finally, the *Japuan* program (women's network) indicates that voter accommodation and navigation can be appropriately managed by disseminating information related to candidate pairs by political elites from the PKS party.

Keywords: Elections; Gender equality; PKS Party; Political Elite; Women's expansion.

ABSTRAK. Peran perempuan sebagai elit politik kian memperlihatkan yang menjadikan ketimpangan gender sangat marak terlihat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji ekspansi, peran dan kontribusi perempuan DPD Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) dalam pemilihan umum kepala daerah Kota Medan tahun 2020 dengan studi kasus pada pasangan Akhyar-Salman. Penelitian kualitatif dilakukan dengan mengumpulkan data berkaitan peran anggota dan pimpinan partai PKS perempuan dalam kemenangan pasangan Akhyar-Salman melalui wawancara mendalam pada subjek penelitian. Penentuan sampel menggunakan teknik *purposive sampling*. Seluruh data diolah secara deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan ekspansi perempuan dalam meningkatkan kualitas dan kuantitas pemilihan kepada daerah di Kota Medan sangat penting, ini ditunjukkan dengan adanya kontribusi elit politik perempuan dalam memobilisasi pelaksanaan kampanye ke masyarakat serta menarik minat masyarakat dari hulu ke hilir untuk memperkenalkan pasangan Akhyar-Salman. Elit politik perempuan memiliki fungsi dan tanggung jawab dalam memenangkan pasangan calon melalui kampanye *door to door* ke masing – masing rumah tangga, membuat program kerja yang menarik minat para perempuan untuk bergabung seperti melaksanakan pengajian perempuan (*dakwah*), membantu masyarakat terdampak bencana dan melaksanakan pendekatan kepada para ulama. Selain itu, ekspansi perempuan yang paling menonjol terletak pada program kesetaraan gender dan pemerataan akses informasi yang memberikan pengaruh paling kuat pada proses kampanye. Program kerja yang dicanangkan oleh pasangan calon walikota dan wakilnya hasil studi pendahuluan ke masyarakat dan dilakukan pengumpulan data oleh para elit politik perempuan DPD PKS. Terakhir, adanya program *japuan* (jaringan perempuan) mengindikasikan akomodasi dan navigasi pemilih dapat dikelola dengan baik melalui penyebaran informasi berkaitan dengan pasangan calon oleh para elit politik dari partai PKS.

Kata kunci: Ekspansi perempuan; Elit Politik; Kesetaraan gender; Partai PKS; PILKADA.

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, women's political participation has grown dramatically, especially in different parts of the democratic party. This is also supported by the Indonesian government's policies promoting women's rights and the abolition of patriarchy in various regions (Aspinall, White, dan Savirani, 2021;

Brilliant, Tawakkal, dan Rohman, 2022; N. Nurdin, 2022). Law Number 1 of 2006 explains that women have the same rights and obligations in the political process and can be actively involved at various levels of politics (Afrianty, 2020). A field review, however, reveals that gender inequality, cultural and governmental structures, and access and political roles between men and women continue to exist

(Haboddin, 2020; Lubis, 2009; Susanti & Lubis, 2015). Thus, structuring the democratic process is needed for political progress in Indonesia (Asmar, 2021; Haryanto, 2009).

The role of women, especially in politics, has made significant progress in Indonesia (Rinaldo, 2013). The involvement of women in various political elements has resulted in the position of gender equality becoming increasingly visible. The increasing capacity of women in the political sphere has a direct impact on the high interest of society in voicing women's rights in the general public, including placing women as political elites occupying strategic components in parliament (Goddess, 2020; Goddess, Kusumaningtyas, Izzati, and Ekawati, 2022; Hillman, 2018; Wardani & Subekti, 2021). In addition, the expansion of women can be seen in the activities of democratic parties, namely, regional head elections, which involve many women as the right hand to win the spouses of candidates, regional cadres, and promotions related to the spouses of candidates who are carried (Aspinall, White, & Savirani, 2021; Badas & Stauffer, 2019). This phenomenon is seen very interestingly in the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS), Medan City, which places women in the electoral process and whose winner is Akhyar-Salman.

In 2020, regional head elections were held in Medan City. The *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) is carrying the candidate for mayor, Akhyar Nassi, and deputy mayor, Salman Alfarisi; uniquely, the party cooperates with the Democratic Party for an electoral process that prioritizes morals, religion, and politics. People who combine political aspects wrapped in religious morals in each of its movements refer to the PKS Party as a proselytizing party (Afrianty, 2020; Lubis, 2009). In terms of electability, the PKS party has many supporters. In addition to being famous and enjoying high sympathy, the party's operations also emphasize the importance of increasing the capacity of cadres and members at all levels of society. Apart from being a party that upholds high religious morals in its operations, PKS involves many women in managing PKS institutions, including contributing to a winning team. Akhyar-Salman (Nurdin, 2011).

Several studies mention that the role and domestication of women in the political world greatly influenced public perception of women's role in politics in the reform era (Aspinall et al., 2021). Furthermore, studies conducted in Indonesia state that in elections and voting, women have a tendency to choose female candidates over men, and female candidates target female voters and use women in campaign teams (Derichs, Fleschenberg, and Hüstebeck, 2006; Fattore, Scotto, and Sitasari, 2010). Various obstacles that result in the representation of

women in Indonesia in the political field are still relatively low, including high institutional barriers in various political parties (Wardani and Subekti, 2021). These public attitudes determine women lower than men (White and Aspinall, 2019), as well as institutional barriers that provide a proportion of women based solely on party electability and needs rather than competence in performing their societal role (Hillman, 2018). The path of women's politics in the country consists of three paths: the elite path, the grassroots path, and a middle lane that entirely serves to enhance the navigation and role of women in political issues (Choi, 2019). Research in Aceh found that the role of women in politics is to have the power and ability to drive change, dare to act and control change and have confidence in working and discussing the process with the parties involved in change. In addition, women play an integrated part in the political process (Wahid, 2015).

Reviewing this phenomenon and the results of previous studies, there has yet to be an identification or in-depth study related to the expansion and contribution of women in elections in Indonesia. We highlighted the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) as the research subject because this party uses many women in the political process, including as the winning team of Akhyar-Salman during the Medan municipal elections. This study examines the expansion, role, and contribution of *DPD* women of the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) in the 2020 Medan City regional head election with a case study on the Akhyar-Salman couple. It is hoped that this research can describe and determine the advantages and disadvantages of women and their contributions in political circles to realize gender equality and minimize gender inequality at all levels of society.

METHOD

Qualitative research design with a field research approach (Darwin et al., 2021). The research was conducted by collecting the data and information needed in this study related to the expansion of women in regional election events, especially in Medan City in 2020. The research location is at the Office of the *Dewan Perwakilan Daerah* (DPD) of the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) of Medan City, located on Jalan Sei Beras, Babura, Medan City, North Sumatra. The subjects of this study were female PKS party members and leaders who participated as political elites in winning the Akhyar-Salman pair. Sample collection in this study used purposive sampling techniques (Adnyana, 2021). Data were collected by conducting in-depth interviews with research subjects. The primary data in this study are interview information related to the

expansion of women as political elites in winning the Akhyar-Salman couple. In contrast, secondary data in this study are other information that supports this research, such as the history of the PKS party, data on programs launched by the Akhyar-Salman pair during the campaign, and others.

The data and information analyzed include the expansion of women in DPD PKS Medan City in the 2020 regional head election, the association and influence of women's expansion on the winning of the Akhyar-Salman pair, the identification of the sector in charge of winning, programs launched by mayoral and deputy mayoral candidates, and the identification of successful and less effective programs related to winning candidates. All data are presented as narratives that are further analyzed with the support of literature studies. Literature is obtained from the PKS party website, reputable or accredited scientific journals, books, and other sources to support theories and findings in the field to compile a more comprehensive discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A Brief History of the *DPD of Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) in Medan City

The history of the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) must be connected to the history of the *Partai Keadilan* (PK) and its fight for power. The establishment of the PKS in Medan City was preceded by the establishment of the Justice Party, which was announced on October 10, 1998, at the Medan Hajj Dormitory by Muhammad Nun, Sigit Pramono Asri, Tifatul Sembiring, and Ikrimah Hamidy. The spirit arising from the formation of this party started with several proselytizing activists in various Indonesian universities holding surveys and discussions, resulting in the approval of Islamic proselytizing through party forums. The Regional Management Council (*DPD*) is a district- or city-level implementing agency (*DPP* PKS, 2020). The *DPD* comprises the general chairperson, deputy chairperson, several sector heads, agency heads, the secretary-general, field secretary, general treasurer, treasurer, and other fields (Nurdin, 2011).

DPD has to wait for derivative programs from the Central Government Council (*DPP*) and Regional Government Council (*DPW*) because the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) is classified as a centralized party. However, although it is classified as a centralized party, the PKS is not totalitarian or strict in implementing its programs and policies. Once the *DPP* issues the program, the *DPW* and *DPD* can align to meet each executive body's requirements. *DPD* is responsible for building a clean and corruption-free government, producing

superior cadres, and fostering cadre identities to produce clean and compassionate cadres. The *DPD* PKS, as a structural political organization, reports to the *Dewan Perwakilan Cabang* (DPC) and has 21 units to support *DPD* performance and synergize cadres in the DPC (*DPP* PKS, 2020).

Although *PKS DPD* Medan City cadres come from various occupational backgrounds, races, and ages, their dedication and enthusiasm for the tasks are evident. In terms of money, legislators, proposals, and cadres, in addition to Bina Social Development, are fearless in being independent and working together to manage money so that a plan can run smoothly. The Medan City *PKS DPD*, which was held at the Medan Hajj Dormitory, confirmed 2016 as a year of pioneering, community service, and defense, based on the results of the Regional Coordination Meeting. In this Rakorda, *PKS* Medan City socializes the *DPP-PKS* North Sumatra derivative program, which includes 58 strategic programs (*DPW* PKS SUMUT, 2023).

The Role and Contribution of Women's Political Elites in General Elections

The *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) must contribute, especially to the community and the general public. As an Islamic-based political party, the PKS continues to provide opportunities for women to be involved and play a role in the political process. This is a manifestation of the law, which indicates that everyone has the right to engage in state, political, and so on efforts. One of the implementations is the ability to distinguish the role of women in the party and demonstrate gender equality in every program and the implementation of programs carried out by the party. This is supported by the fact that women have the right to enter politics and have been able to compete with men and sit in various government institutions as political elites in recent years. This indicates the progress of Indonesian women in politics. As a result, the more excellent the opportunity given to women in various political fields, the greater the formation of a female political elite, particularly in Medan City. This can be seen in part in the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS), which continues to offer opportunities for women to join and become involved in politics, including one in the 2020 Medan City Regional Head Election. This follows what is stated (Rinaldo, 2011; Sakai and Fauzia, 2016)

"The women's movement in obtaining gender equality cannot be isolated from the influence of Kartini's ideas, which are very ambitious to align women with men, even though Kartini herself was unable to escape the patriarchal culture that was so prevalent at that time. Kartini is also

strongly opposed to polygamy, although she wishes to marry a married man. Several steps can be taken to improve the quality of life of women so they have the same ability as men in various areas of social life, including the following: 1). protecting women; 2). empowering and fulfilling women's basic rights; 3) improving women's welfare; 4) developing the role of women; and 5) a constitutional commitment to women. In an effort to improve the quality of life of the Indonesian people, this can be a significant step toward achieving gender equality" (Derichs et al., 2006; Hillman, 2018).

The results of identification on the ground show that women play various vital roles in the political process, especially the female political elite of the DPD PKS Medan City, which has expanded to secure the couple Akhyar and Salman as candidates for the mayor and deputy mayor of Medan for the 2021-2025 term. Essentially, this role is given to women through coercion and their will. This includes the female political elite of the DPD PKS, who also contributed significantly as supporting party members. The results of the identification show that the role of the female political elite is sufficient to achieve positive results by improving the rights of the majority of women in political circles in society. The female political elite plays an essential role in gaining support and votes from society, including the contribution of the female political elite to mobilizing women more than men. This is due to the large number of female voters in Medan City. Similar to research, Kunovich and Paxton (2005) and Aspinall et al. (2021) state that women make a significant contribution, particularly in the search for votes, by establishing close ties with the community to elicit sympathy and provide information about the candidate's partner through direct campaigning. This follows what is stated by Lubis (2009) relating to women's political participation in Medan City.

"The Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) is a political group in Medan City that looks different from other political groups. The PKS, as a political party, not only puts forward political issues in its actions but also bases its movement on Christian morals. Therefore, it is not uncommon for the PKS to be called a proselytizing political party or a political party whose appearance is more similar to the proselytizing movement" (Lubis, 2009).

The results are undeniable; if the work of the elite can be executed effectively, the winning effort will be successful, especially in the withdrawal of sympathizers from supporting the candidate's spouse.

As a result, based on the situation, female political elites have better potential than male political elites to mobilize support from society, particularly women. There is also a desired outcome for local elections, namely, that the votes of these women voters should be used to educate women through knowledge, interaction, and other support that can help women develop excellent self-awareness so that they can avoid engaging in harmful behavior and discrimination (Brown et al., 2022; Kroeber, 2022). Like the previous statement and the statement according to Muhtadi (2009) and Rofhani and Fuad (2021)

"The PKS is an outstanding party in many aspects. Unlike other political parties, the PKS gains public support for mobilizing its constituents regularly and not only during elections, operating as a "cadere party" that requires its members to adhere to strict training and behavioral standards and assisting victims of natural disasters and poverty throughout Indonesia. The development of the PKS from a social movement to a political party can be understood by examining the origins of the PKS and the international Islamic context" (Rofhani and Fuad, 2021).

This study also identified the role of female political elites in providing good education about the role of society in regional elections and information about the importance of voting in elections. To get closer to society, women's political elites also conduct activities such as meeting directly with the community and discussing and listening to community issues to hear the aspirations of "what the community needs." Furthermore, to obtain support during the campaign process, it is necessary to approach the community from the smallest to the most prominent location. For example, strategies should be implemented at the village, subdistrict, and district (city) levels. This makes the involvement of the DPD-PKS women's political elite in the city of Medan in securing the victory of the Akhyar-Salman couple very significant and profitable. It is evident from the activities that people are generous with their time and resources through publications, cooking contests, webinars, door-to-door campaigns, and other activities. Women's political elites are also significant in winning the support of women voters. Undoubtedly, the large number of female voters has inspired female political leaders to become more active and contribute to the campaign of the Akhyar-Salman couple.

The role of women's political elites in influencing Akhyar-Salman's victory

Talking about the role of women is the same as talking about the role of women in politics. Today,

many political revolutions have been carried out by women. In a sense, there has been gender equality between men and women in politics, driven by a political and legal spirit that controls political freedom for all (Choi, 2019; Dewi et al., 2022). Women's contributions today give rise to several roles and awards. The female political elite influences the ongoing political process in other ways. In Medan, the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) has a distinctive appearance compared to other political parties. This is inseparable from parties that not only put politics first but also make religion the main spearhead of the foundation to be carried out. This is why the PKS is referred to as the proselytizing party since many proselytizing movements can be found in its programs while considering the needs and interests of the community (Nuridin, 2011).

According to *DPD PKS* members in the Medan City area, the influence of the female political elite must be able to provide good education to the community for the progress and prosperity of the people (Sweinstani, 2022). Awareness, closeness, and effective communication with the community are not only established during election activities but also continue and are maintained before and after elections. The contemporary status of women in the family is very influential, and they have made some contributions (Aminuddin and Ramadhan, 2022; Börjesson and Broady, 2016; Croissants and Walkenhorst, 2019). Women also provide quality lessons and education for family children (Bali moune-Lutz, 2020; Bano and Dyonisius, 2022; Bovens and Wille, 2017). In carrying out the primary duties and functions as a female political elite during the 2020 Medan mayoral and deputy mayoral elections, women have roles in winning the Akhyar-Salman couple, including:

1. Responsible sector

The female political elite is supported in carrying out their roles by various related sectors. This aims to facilitate the program implementation process and facilitate coordination and delegation of tasks to each team. By dividing the program among teams, each team can focus on and carry out its tasks independently. Related sectors play an essential role in winning a particular pair. Similarly, because *DPD PKS* Kota Medan has many female party members and the majority of Medan city voters are women, a sector that cares about women is needed concerning governance and the fulfillment of women's rights.

Moreover, the position must be commensurate with the abilities of the political elite. The program will run efficiently if given to experts in their respective domains. In carrying out the program, one of which is socializing and getting closer to the community, professionals and experts in various

professions are needed. In the *DPD PKS*, many active female members contribute to the party's progress. Each group consists of women, and several teams provide equal opportunities for women. For example, the *Japuan* (the women's network) is exclusively composed of women and is responsible for accommodating women.

The female political elite also served as the companion wife of the Akhyar-Salman couple. Therefore, any action involving Mr. Akhyar's wife and Mr. Salman was accompanied by members of the women's political elite of the *DPD PKS*. On the other hand, some individuals manage *DPC-PKS* in several subdistricts; this individual serves as a female coordinator in the district and as a speaker for various initiatives sponsored by the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS). This makes the *DPD-PKS* women's political elites responsible for the many sectors involved in winning the Akhyar-Salman pair. The sector reflected in the campaign process focuses on engaging the public and attracting people's tendency to choose the pair of favored candidates. This method is a good start in addition to obtaining an overview of potential leaders and providing closeness between the leader and the community starting before and after the leader is elected (Aminuddin and Ramadhan, 2022).

2. Key Elements

Every candidate participating in election activities must include something that can garner public support. Typically, to win a pickup, a candidate will share exciting information about himself, engage in a series of actions that can garner public support, highlight his successful track record, and the prospective leader's preference for societal needs (Riswanto, 2016). All this is done so that the public knows the distinctive characteristics of the candidate. One of them is the Akhyar-Salman pair. As members of the winning team, they must transmit the strength and superiority of this pair compared to the Bobby-Aulia pair, who are the opponents of the related prospective pair. Based on the findings of the researchers and the information provided by the informants, his experience of leading and performance in the bureaucracy can arouse public sympathy and attract people to give him a choice. This is evident from the position of Mr. Akhyar, a former deputy mayor of Kota Medan who later became the acting mayor. At the same time, Mr. Salman once served as deputy chairperson of the North Sumatra Provincial DPRD and had experience managing the *PKS*.

In contrast, Mr. Akhyar is a native of Medan. In the public's view, Mr. Akhyar has neither negative trends nor performances considered detrimental to

society. On the other hand, Mr. Salman has a good record in government. He was a scholar of the Koran who could persuade people to vote for him. Even when not in the general election setting, the *DPD PKS* continues to help and engage with the community. Therefore, party administrators continue to help people with their various challenges and seek answers. It is known that both Mr. Akhyar and Mr. Salman were involved in religious matters. Mr. Akhyar is considered a leader dedicated to worship. This is similar to Mr. Salman, who is well known in the bureaucracy and recitation. He is also an *ustadz*, someone who actively delivers community conversations.

The performance of opposition parties is a reliable factor influencing people to vote for the Akhyar-Salman ticket. For example, many people are dissatisfied with Jokowi's leadership because he is from the *PDIP* party and is a political opponent, especially Bobby, who is carried by the *PDIP* and the president's son-in-law; therefore, this issue can also be used to rally support Akhyar-Salman over Bobby-Aulia. According to the explanation given by the sources, the comments mentioned above can serve as the basis for items believed to elicit compassion and public support for the Akhyar-Salman couple. This combination is also seen as more compassionate toward people in need than their political opponents. It is advantageous for the country to hear from the people.

In each general election, a coalition is formed to win and influence the policies to be put in place. This coalition can be formed before or after the general election, along with Akhyar and Salman's victory in the 2020 regional elections in Medan. The only coalition party owned by the *DPD PKS* is the Democratic Party. With the partnership of these parties, Akhyar and Salman have the potential and right to run in the 2020 local elections. In the context of the coalition, it is undeniable that there are many programs launched by each coalition party, in addition to programs carried out simultaneously with the alliance. Several collaborations or programs have been implemented to win over the Akhyar-Salman pairing. While the electoral process is still navigating the complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic, some obstacles have been encountered when running preestablished programmes or partnerships that have implications for the ability to gather many individuals.

In addition, we cannot explicitly discuss winning programs because some programs are included in the privacy of prospective spouses. Based on the results of identification in the field, many of the subjects of the study worked with the political elite of the Democratic Party, while others did not.

This cooperation is arranged into a team known as a joint secretary. The *PKS* party cooperates with the Democratic party, probably because both parties are independent of the government and have enough similarities to be juxtaposed in the regional head election of Medan City 2020.

3. Proposed Program

Every proposed program and activity carried out during the general election is included in the programs that each pair of candidates for regional heads must own. In addition, the program that is launched must follow the needs and problems of the community. Regarding the victory won by Akhyar-Salman, each subfield created a program independently to garner public support. The activities and programs built are a means to provide knowledge and contributions related to the appropriate stakeholder program to be selected. Regional leaders will implement policies to maximize the region's and its people's potential. Several programs are offered to the public during the campaign period in elections. In this case, the general election commission serves as an organizational institution, and campaigns are carried out for an extended period. Like the socialization program of political education, it is realized for political purposes and not solely to obtain a position (Fauzan, 2022).

For example, many people still vote without understanding in the sense that they do not understand how the chosen candidate contributes. It is the responsibility of party cadres to raise awareness through political education. Various efforts were made to win the Akhyar-Salman pair, including visiting people's homes, participating in women's recitations, helping those affected by natural disasters, etc. The winning team also went straight from house to house. Then, after distributing gifts and explaining the benefits and advantages of the Akhyar-Salman couple, the programs delivered are directly related to the needs of the community while still listening to the aspirations of the community. In addition, the winning team offered speakers, both *Ustadz* and *Ustadzah*, for sermons for mothers in the context of proselytizing and to obtain support from mothers, especially women who already have the right to vote. The results of the identification on the ground show that the program implemented by the female political elite of the *DPD PKS* Medan City to win the Akhyar-Salman pair in the 2020 Medan City regional head election is a consequence of the party's realization that the winning team is needed to work in an area that is the responsibility of political cadres. It is just that each team has a particular division of labor. On the other hand, the jobs assigned to the female political elite are also different; for example, some are assigned to escort the wife from Akhyar-

Salman's marriage, as speakers at regional events for which the party is responsible, as well as taking to the field to engage with the public. In terms of the program itself, it must be delivered consistently to entice the public to vote.

The achievement of the program used to attract community sympathizers by the Akhyar-Salman couple is closely related to the magnitude of its ability to attract people to choose a prospective partner. The results are expressed as satisfactory, wrong, sound, and excellent cavalcade. Identification shows that there are good programs and initiatives for gathering community support. The interview with Mrs. Sri Rezeky revealed that the *DPD PKS* friendship program is a foundational initiative to win over prospective couples. This is because the community's enthusiastic response to the gathering activities was positively welcomed through recitation, proselytizing, and meetings with ustad and ustadzah in the supporting area. This friendship program is provided to fulfill community recitations and establish friendships accompanied by local campaigns while considering the region's potential and the community's needs.

According to the description above, all programs implemented by the winning team were successfully implemented. However, many obstacles come with it, such as the pandemic and attacks from political opponents. The results of the friendship program show that the program is running successfully and has a positive impact. All this is seen as the result of the program that has been carried out, even though the Akhyar-Salman couple was unsuccessful in becoming mayor and deputy mayor of Medan in 2021-2025. This is due to a difference in the number of votes cast, resulting in nearly identical results, according to the results of the regional head elections released by the Medan City Election Commission. Considering the program, in the future, the expansion of women in the campaign process and voter recruitment will be an essential part of supporting the success of PKS cadres in occupying the positions of mayor and deputy mayor.

4. Failure factors

In the context of the winning candidate pairs in each regional head election, each cadre will find programs that are not well run, do not have community support, or cannot be put into place for other reasons. The COVID-19 pandemic, like the couple Akhyar and Salman, hindered the campaign because it could not involve large crowds. Ineffective programs result from problems; people who do not have or understand the technology and those who do not care about the components of local elections are identified as obstacles. According to the

study, all projects were successfully implemented, although many implementations could have been better. For example, webinars via Zoom have little public support. This is caused by people who need help understanding how to use technology, people's technological limitations, pandemics, and other factors. From the many arguments above, we can see that the many obstacles that caused the ineffectiveness of the Akhyar-Salman pairing winning program were, first, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, which constrained in-person meetings with the community. Furthermore, there are still many people who need help understanding political education, there are still many people who are interested in money politics, there are still many people who are apathetic to regional elections, and there are still many people who need to be more technologically literate. Through this identification, in the future, *DPC*, *DPW*, and *DPD PKS* cadres can maximize the space that has yet to be maximized to refer when carrying out pairs of candidates, especially from the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS).

CONCLUSION

Expanding women's roles in supporting and improving the quality and quantity of local election results is very important. The female political elite has the task, function, and benefit of attracting people's interest from upstream to downstream to choose the candidate's spouse. The role, contribution, and expansion of women are vital in the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS), which is located in the Medan City area and is the winning team Akhyar-Salman, especially in helping to launch door-to-door programs, encouraging women in the Medan City area to participate in supporting political parties, providing in-depth education related to politics, including campaigning for candidates' spouses, and involving the community in relinquishing power. In addition, the expansion of women significantly increases the number of women while minimizing gender inequality, especially in the city of Medan. The existence of the Japuan (women's network) program indicates that voter accommodation and navigation can be appropriately managed, including as a way of forwarding information related to candidates' spouses. In the future, further research is needed concerning efforts that can make women a model of party support, including making women equal in political manifestations to avoid gender inequality in a region.

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