

## PRACTICE OF IDENTITY POLITICS IN INDONESIAN DEMOCRACY: CASE STUDY OF GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN WEST NUSA TENGGARA, INDONESIA

**HABIB ALWI\***

Doctoral Program Social Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science Airlangga University Surabaya Indonesia. \*Corresponding Author E-mail: habib.alwi-2018@fisip.unair.ac.id

**KACUNG**

Professor, Doctoral Program Social Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science Airlangga University Surabaya Indonesia. E-mail: kacung.marijan@fisip.unair.ac.id

**ARIBOWO**

Assistant Professor, Doctoral Program Social Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science Airlangga University Surabaya Indonesia. E-mail; aribowo@fisip.unair.ac.id

### **Abstract**

*Criticism against identity politics, both in public discourse and political theory, has intensified over the past decade with the rise of right wings populism and the polarization of politics. Identity politics is a contested term. Nevertheless, there are systematic overlaps between current criticisms of identity politics that mainly repeat arguments that have been similarly articulated since the 1990s. This study aims to analyze the practice of identity politics in Indonesian democracy, especially in the context of the 2024 NTB gubernatorial election. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. The results of this study found that identity politics tends to operate softly so that it can provide affiliation of choices and preferences to voters in the 2024 NTB gubernatorial election. The role of habitus in influencing voters is quite significant, especially since the actors involved in the arena have sufficient modalities to influence voters. Overall, the practice of identity politics in regional elections is very important in order to promote a more inclusive and representative local democracy. To understand identity politics as a democratizing oscillation between power and reason, the radical democratic account has to be refined through standpoint theory. The proceed in the systematically reconstruct the equivalences of both theoretical traditions, filling a gap in the existing research literature that is ignorant of these equivalences.*

**Keywords:** Regional Elections, Identity Politics, Democracy, Social Practices.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In recent decades, democratic transitions in developing countries have become a serious concern related to instability in the political system. This phenomenon has given rise to a movement that leads to radicalism and separatism that can threaten the stability of democracy. The simultaneous regional head elections in 2024 in Indonesia mark a local democracy that is full of identity politics, where the capitalization of identity politics finds its moment after the reformation. This article aims to examine the contestation of identity politics in electoral politics. Where studies on electoral political contestation, especially at the local level, identity is often mobilized as a tool in electoral politics (Klinken, 2009). Although there are many other aspects that also influence electoral politics such as economic capital, *money politics*, clientelism, party-clients, identity is always present in the local political arena (Aspinal & Berenschot, 2020). Social media engagements were divided into four aspects: latent engagement, follower engagement, expressive engagement, and system engagement, to identify the digital activities that encourage respondents to participate. The study highlights the

nuanced dynamics of digital political engagement and its role in shaping political participation (Joseph Ching Velasco et al, 2024). A typology of Malaysia's Green Infrastructure (GI) from the policies and regulations is prescribed in this study. The reported findings may catalyse GI planning and establishment in KL for a more sustainable future (Owen Thian Seng Yeo et al, 2023). Therefore, this article specifically wants to see the variants of identity politics that are played in electoral politics at the local level of West Nusa Tenggara.

The rise of identity with the emergence of regional identity as a form of political preference to reconstruct local values on the basis of ethnic and religious primordialism. The rise of identity politics can be seen in direct regional head elections (pilkada) which tend to use identity politics (Romli, 2019a: 85). In line with the direction of reform, Indonesia experienced rapid and fundamental changes in political institutions. Early political liberalization after the New Order was marked by, among other things, the redefinition of people's political rights (Romli, 2019b: 4). The process of simultaneous democratic and administrative reform has transformed the country's government from being centralized and authoritarian to being more democratic and decentralized. Since 2001, Indonesia has adopted decentralization as a framework for government institutions by Hadiz (2011:19) considering it appropriate or suitable for Indonesia. The formation of administrative regions in several regions in Indonesia simultaneously shows the occurrence of territorialization - a concept to refer to the development of the phenomenon of politicization of ethnic identity (sometimes mixed with religion or others) for the purpose of forming new government regions (Sparringa, 2005: 2). Emphasis is not only placed on affirmative action but rather on the manner in which it is performed. Our thought for policy implications considered the urgent need to review extant laws and policies enacted on inclusiveness, focusing on the yearly release of data by the commission across the country and effective sanctions for defaulters (Emmanuel et al, 2024).

The phenomenon of identity politics by carrying the issue of regional primordialism or local interests cannot be denied by many political actors, both local and national politicians, using these issues intensively for the sake of power. Seeing the vast territory and diversity of the Indonesian nation, often the practice of identity politics in the name of regional interests can trigger conflict. Likewise, religious identity politics prioritizes the interests of group members with the same identity or characteristics. Furthermore, Muhtadi's study (2018) found that religion and ethnicity were important factors in the regional head election in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election. Identity politics works when the ethnic and religious composition of a region is not too unequal and depends on the primordial identity of the competing candidates. Voter behavior is not solely based on voter rationality, but on the mobilization of identity politics based on primordial issues. Based on the above study, it provides enrichment to this paper, but previous studies tend to be limited to primordial identity politics (religion and ethnicity). This study intends to explain how the practice of identity politics in the 2024 gubernatorial election contestation arena in West Nusa Tenggara, which presents many variants of identity being played.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The word identity in the context of political studies is a phenomenon that emerged in the 1960s in contemporary intellectual discourse. The identity of an individual or a person is constructed as a dialogical process that marks the boundaries of himself and what makes him the same or different from others (Hall, 1992: 274). Meanwhile, Judith Butler (1992: 15) states that the construction of identity involves all the opportunities of various competing categories of collective distinction and therefore, these identity categories are not descriptive but normative. Identity can work as an object (or a series of interrelated objects) in the social world (Lawler 2021: 23). Identity can be used to describe both people and types of people, and to distinguish between them. Identity is normally used

in a political context (Scruton (2013: 434), to refer not to the relationship that each thing has to itself, but rather to self-identification. Cressida Heyes (2007) definitively in *the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* states that identity politics is a marking of political activity in a broader sense and theorization of the discovery of experiences of injustice experienced together by members of a particular social group. Identity-based political movements have struggled throughout the world against oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, culture, nationality, disability, age, and other forms of socially recognized identity. The constellation of practices, beliefs about identity, life experiences related to various identities, and legal or formal recognition of identity not only undergo continuous change but can produce completely new forms of identity (Alcoff, 2003: 2-4). However, the differences do not simply exist, these differences are not 'given naturally' but are made (Ignatiev, 1994: 13-14).

Meanwhile, according to Giddens (1991:75), self-identity is understood through the skill of narrating about oneself, thereby telling a story. consistent feelings about continuity biography. Fukuyama (2018:9) uses identity in a specific sense that helps to understand why it is so important for contemporary politics. Initially, identity grew as a distinction between a person and the outside world, with all the rules and social norms that were not able to recognize the value or dignity of a person. Identity politics then encompassed political struggles in the contemporary world; from democratic revolutions to new social movements, from nationalism and Islamism to politics on American campuses. Bourdieu 1979: vii) defines habitus as a system of enduring and changing dispositions that functions as a generative basis for objectively structured and integrated practices (*system of durable, transposable disposition, which generates and organizes practices*) (Maher, et al., 2009: 13).

In line with the concept of habitus, there is also the concept of disposition in Bourdieu's sense (1992: 149; Jenkin, 2010: 110; Haryatmoko, 2003: 11) referring to three things, namely, *first*, the results of regulatory practices that are equivalent to the definition of structure; *second*, the way agents are related to their habits; *third*, tendencies. Furthermore, habitus as a generative basis for practice implies that social agents practice and socialize with their social structures through habitus. This means that habitus is in a subjective structure; it is obtained from the results of learning or internalization of objective structures. Habitus takes its formation scheme from the objective structure or social arena (Jenkins, 2010: 107), but this does not mean that habitus reproduces the total scheme that forms it, but rather is in dialectic with schemes that have previously been internalized in the individual's subjective structure.

Bourdieu emphasizes the relationship between structure and agents that is dialectical. As part of the structure of society, agents cannot deny the conditions that exist in the objective structure, for example, regulating how to behave, speak, and view and understand the world. Practices are not determined objectively, nor are they the product of free will (Ritzer, 2014:898). At this stage the principle that works is the internalization of externality, namely the moment when things that are external and objective are internalized through the arena. to the agent. However, at the same time, the agent also has a subjective structure related to the habitus nya. At this stage the principle that works is the externalization of internality, the moment when subjective things are externalized. Practice is what mediates between habitus and the social world. On the one hand through practice habitus is created, on the other hand the social world is created as a result of habitus (Ritzer, 2014:482).

However, this study intends to add in addition to the four capitals that have been described above, namely political capital. Bourdieu does not explicitly mention political capital. Therefore, this study will describe the concept to complete the conceptual basis of this study. According to Marijan (2010:184) political capital is a form of political support that comes from the people or from political forces that are seen as representatives of the people. This capital is the main one for all individuals

who want to participate in the contestation in the direct regional elections that are related to political networks and relations with political elites. Between habitus and arena, both are dialectical and mutually assume each other. Between subjective representations inherent in the actor and objective structures in the social field. The concept of the arena of struggle becomes important and decisive considering the diversity of conditions in a society that cannot be reduced between one field and another. Bourdieu's postulate is that in society there are always two positions between those who dominate and those who are dominated. However, the difference is in the organization. A person who has dominance will be determined by modality and how he can determine the right strategy (Haryatmoko, 2003:11). In the arena, people assume that the arena exists because of full involvement in the game as well as the result of the game. In order for the game to truly exist, it takes people who believe in the game. Believe that the game is indeed valuable, believe in the importance of participating in the game to get what is being fought for. This is what Bourdieu calls *illusion*, namely believing that what is at stake in the game is indeed worth fighting for (Wibowo, 2024: 11).

The interiorization of *illusion* in an arena will create habitus. Habitus is a product of ontological agreement between the individual's mental structure and the objective structure of social space. Habitus makes an individual's practices adjust to the demands of the arena without the individual having to make conscious considerations about his interests. In an arena, there are various kinds of relationships that are formed. According to Bourdieu (1984), those who have more resources will maximize to get the greatest possible profit even though they must be prepared to face resistance from those who are dominated. An arena is a battleground for individuals who will face each other to obtain or preserve what is at stake. Specifically, the concept of arena in this study can be the arena for the election of the NTB governor's regional head in 2024.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This research is based on a qualitative method with a case study approach, which is not intended to see the cause and effect of an event linearly, but rather to see events and incidents relationally and dialectically which are *exploratory and descriptive* (Yin, 1993: 1) Case study is a type of research used to collect information and data in depth through observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and relevant previous research results to obtain answers and theoretical basis regarding the research problems to be studied (Creswell 2015). So that researchers can code, classify, organize and place the interview results according to research themes. This research was conducted in Lombok as the city center of West Nusa Tenggara Province where most of the population is concentrated here. To obtain data on the research problems studied, this study involved a number of informants. After the data was collected, the data was analyzed following the flow of Miles & Huberman (1992:54) through three flows. *Firs*, the data reduction stage, namely selecting, focusing, shortening, abstracting, and transforming data in interview transcripts and related documents. In this case, the researcher will rearrange the results of the data obtained through interviews and objective papers to simplify the data received so that it can be studied more deeply. *Second*, the presentation of data to analyze the research is intended to develop a description of the information so that it is arranged more neatly so that the writing flow becomes more systematic. *Third*, drawing conclusions or verification based on findings and evidence.

### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Political Map in NTB**

West Nusa Tenggara Province is a region consisting of the union of two islands, namely Lombok Island and Sumbawa Island. The existence of the two islands that form West Nusa Tenggara shows a variety of differences in terms of language, culture and customs. Lombok Island, also known as '*Gumi Sasak*'

(land of the Sasak), is inhabited by the Sasak ethnic group. While Sumbawa Island or often called the land of *Samawa* is inhabited by the Sumbawa and Bima ethnic groups. The dominance of nationalist parties such as Golkar and Gerindra in the composition of legislative members for the 2024-2029 period, which are in fact supporting parties for the government in power, allows them to make various political maneuvers that can influence every decision in the NTB legislature, including in the selection and nomination of prospective governor and deputy governor candidates. The Golkar Party and the Gerindra Party are quite important to be taken into account by other political parties because they are the winning parties, both getting 10 seats in the DPRD of West Nusa Tenggara Province. The number of votes for political parties and the number of seats in the 2024 legislative election in NTB can be seen in the following table 1, The majority of the population is Muslim with a santri culture (Nahdlatul Wathan and Nahdlatul Ulama). Like most Muslim communities, the lives of the Lombok community are dominated by mosques and Islamic boarding schools which are the hallmarks of the Lombok community. The Sasak community, like most Lombok communities, is characterized by Islamic culture. Sasak culture is identical to Islamic culture with a santri culture, especially one based on traditional Islamic culture with the influence of the largest Islamic socio-religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Wathan, Nahdlatul Ulama, and a small part of modern Islam, namely Muhammadiyah.

The religious identities that develop in NTB are also very diverse as the religions recognized by the State and Government of Indonesia include: 1) Islam as many as 5.23 million people (96.83%; 2) Hinduism 130, 72 thousand people (2.42%; 3) Buddhism 16, 91 thousand people (0.31%; 4) Christianity 13.35 thousand people (0.25%); 5) Catholicism 9.92 thousand people (0.18; and 6) Confucianism 46 people. (BPS Prov. NTB 2021). Although Muslims are the majority group, Lombok society basically reflects a pluralistic and multi-regional society inhabited by people from various ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds ranging from tribes originating from Java, Bali, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, China and Arabia. Although dominant in terms of quantity and claims to land ownership, these three tribes (Sasak, Sumbawa, and Bima) share economic and social resources with residents from other tribes. Multicultural life is seen factually especially in the city of Mataram, a city that is a meeting place for various identities and a center of government.

**Table 1: Votes and seats won by political parties in the 2024 legislative elections in NTB**

No.	Political Party Name	Vote Acquisition	Number of Seats
1.	Functional Group Party	479,010	10
2.	Great Indonesia Movement Party	407,342	10
3.	Prosperous Justice Party	330,546	8
4.	United Development Party	247,210	7
5.	Democratic Party	264,565	6
6.	National Awakening Party	229,254	6
7.	National Democratic Party	228,446	4
8.	National Mandate Party	215,443	4
9.	PDI Perjuangan	213,199	4
10.	United Indonesia Party	144,146	3
11.	Crescent Star Party	102,828	2
12.	People's Conscience Party	69,611	1
13.	Gelora Party	84,747	-
14.	Indonesian Solidarity Party	22,932	-
15.	Ummat Party	15,652	-
16.	Nusantara Awakening Party	11,457	-
17.	Labor Party	11,395	-
18.	Garuda Party	9,412	-
<b>Amount</b>			<b>65</b>

Source: Document of KPUD. NTB Province 2024.

### Candidates and Political Parties

Historical background and geopolitical composition are important considerations when looking at local political phenomena in NTB Province. The election of governor and deputy governor in NTB on November 27, 2024 featured three pairs of candidates. Judging from the supporting parties in the 2024 NTB gubernatorial election, the gubernatorial candidate pair Lalu Muhamad Iqbal-Indah Damayanti Putri were mostly supported by the Advanced Indonesia Coalition (KIM) with ten coalition parties that won 34 seats in parliament or (52%). Then followed by the pair Zulkieflimasyah-Moh.Suhaili with 18 seats or (28%), and finally the pair Sitti Rohmi Djalilah-Musyafirin with 13 seats or (20%). The names of the supporting parties for the candidate pairs in detail can be seen in the table below as follows table 2.

Simultaneous regional elections in Indonesia will be held on November 27, 2024, including the election of the governor and deputy governor of NTB for the 2024-2029 period. In this local democratic event, there are three pairs of competing candidates: *First*, candidate pair number one, namely Dr. Hj. Sitti Rohmi Djalillah-Dr. HW Musyafirin. Sitti Rohmi Djalilah was born in Pancor, East Lombok, an academic and politician. Rohmi is the former deputy governor of NTB for the 2018-2023 period. *Second*, candidate pair number two is Dr. H. Zulkieflimasyah-H. Moh. Suhaili Fadil Tohir, MM. Zulkieflimasyah was born in Sumbawa and was a former governor of NTB for the 2018-2023 period. *Third*, candidate pair number three is Dr. H. Lalu Muhamad Iqbal-Indah Damayanti Putri, MM. Lalu Muhamad Iqbal was born in Praya, Central Lombok, is a diplomat who serves as a spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and previously served as the Indonesian Ambassador to Turkey. Iqbal is one of President Prabowo Subianto's confidants and was named a cadre of the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra). His running mate Indah Damayanti Putri was born in Dompu and is a former regent of Bima Regency for two terms (2016-2025). Indah is a politician from the Golongan Karya Party (Golkar) and her political career was as Deputy Chairperson of the Bima Regency DPRD in 2014-2019. Indah is also listed as Chairperson of the DPD II of the Golkar Party in Bima Regency 2013-present.

**Table 2: Parties supporting candidate pairs and number of seats in parliament/percentage**

No. Sequence	Candidate Pair	Supporting Party	Number of Parliamentary Seats/Percentage
1.	Dr. Hj. Sitti Rohmi Djalilah - Dr. HW Musyafirin	National Awakening Party (PKB), PDI Perjuangan, United Indonesia Party (Perindo), Umat Party	13 seats or 20%
2.	Dr. H. Zulkieflimasyah - H. Moh. Suhaili Fadil Tohir, MM	Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), Democratic Party (PD), National Democratic Party (NasDem)	18 seats or 28%
3.	Dr. H. Lalu Muhammad Iqbal-Indah Damayanti Putri, MM	Gerindra Party, Golkar Party, United Development Party (PPP), National Mandate Party (PAN), Crescent Star Party (PBB), People's Conscience Party (Hanura), Gelora Party, United Indonesia Party (PSI), Prima Party, and Garuda Party	34 seats or 52%

Source: NTB Provincial KPU Document 2024.

In the 2024 gubernatorial and vice gubernatorial elections, Lalu Muhamad Iqbal managed to win the gubernatorial seat by defeating his two incumbent competitors. The NTB General Election Commission determined the Lalu Muhamad Iqbal-Indah Damayanti Putri pair as the winners in the 2024 NTB gubernatorial election, winning 1,163,194 votes or 41.15 percent of valid votes. This result

beat the incumbent Zulkieflimasyah-Suhaili's vote acquisition of 887,791 votes or 31.40 percent. Then followed by the Sitti Rohmi Djalilah-HWMusyafirin pair who won 775,937 votes or 27.45 percent (NTB Provincial KPU Document 2024).

*The victory of Lalu Muhamad Iqbal-Indah Damayanti Putri further strengthens the position of identity politics that displays various identity variants and this is an opportunity for other local elites to compete in the next regional elections. The Iqbal-Dinda pair is a combination of Lombok and Sumbawa (Sasak-Bima) geopolitically a newcomer in the 2024 NTB gubernatorial election, surprising many parties with quite fantastic vote acquisition. This undermines the analysis of many observers and local political observers, because Iqbal is not someone who has a long history in regional politics. Meanwhile, the phenomenon of the incumbent's defeat was acknowledged by Zulkieflimasyah and Sitti Rohmi that Iqbal's supporters were very solid. This is because Iqbal is a Gerindra cadre and Indah is a Golkar cadre so that the party structure can exert pressure. The victory of Lalu Muhamad Iqbal-Indah Damayanti Putri is their ability to accumulate capital in the arena. This is in accordance with the statement of informant Agus that regional election politics requires political modality, social modality and economic modality when talking about electoral modality. There is a social modality, one of which is habitus, then there is political modality. The working of party machines and bureaucratic machines and there is economic modality with the working of materials. This is when compared to the 2018 NTB regional election when Zulkieflimasyah was first elected as governor (interview June 6, 2024).*

In the NTB regional elections, each stakeholder will be involved in making the candidate pair a success by involving various elements of identity and communities in society. Each community has a symbol that is an important capital in politics and through figures, networks, parties, masses, and other capital becomes the driving energy for candidate candidates in gaining votes.

*Indeed, there is no rule that requires the determination of such a gubernatorial candidate pair and there is no binding rule, but based on propriety and geopolitical considerations alone. In the leadership succession, regional or geopolitical identity (the island land system) has long been played. This political practice provides an opportunity for candidates to convey their interests through their shared identity. The practice of identity politics using regional identity in regional elections is important for prospective candidates in attracting public sympathy. So that the existence of this regional identity can lead local elites to encourage the presence of identity politics. This was also explained by informant Lalu Aksar Anshori that geopolitically, tribal identity still exists and is difficult to eliminate because democracy is the institutionalization of identities. So that identity is inherent and always a selling point in local politics. This kind of practice is common and common in leadership succession in the regions so that it can raise enthusiasm to gain sympathy and win the hearts of voters (Interview December 16, 2024).*

Pilkada is part of the mechanism of democracy and politics in the political system. The general election of regional heads and deputy regional heads, abbreviated as Pilkada, is carried out directly as an implementation of local political democracy in Indonesia since 2005. Pilkada is an indicator of local politics that has implemented democratization in order to build its region and provide welfare for its citizens. In the context of NTB, the practice of identity politics by using various variants in the NTB gubernatorial election is a strategy carried out by candidates to gain support from the community. The identity variants can be in the form of regional identity (geopolitics), religion, religious mass organizations and other symbols of local identity.

*If political interests are understood in their entirety, all of these elements must be considered because politics is not just playing logically, but there are psychological issues. Politics considers the psychological power of society because it will make it politically easier to realize its vision, mission and programs. Therefore, according to informant Didik Sumardi, part of the psychological aspect is the element of diversity, ethnic diversity or geopolitical regional representation. It is important to note*

*because it is a binding force in NTB. So taking the option and assessing the representation of two figures can represent two large entities in NTB, and it is also politically beneficial. When viewed from the three candidate pairs, all of them reflect representation based on their respective regional or geopolitical identities (Interview December 23, 2024).*

*It is indeed difficult to avoid that in every election, including the gubernatorial election, the issue of candidate representation is always a political and ethnic consideration. Because it allows for easier consolidation and communication with various regional entities in society, as explained by informant Lalu Sirojulhadi that there are two main considerations, namely ethical and political considerations. Ethical considerations are more about attitudes on how to accommodate entities from Sumbawa Island. While political considerations are interpreted as something that has been calculated at the electoral level because it will influence the possibility of winning the contest (Interview on June 4, 2024).*

#### **Religious identity based on mass organizations.**

Identity politics has become a political reality in post-New Order democracy in Indonesia, both at the national and local levels, especially in the context of gubernatorial elections and regent/mayor elections. In the NTB gubernatorial election, each candidate actor saw ethnicity and religion as important for vote banks, even socio-religious organizations became a necessity that must be approached. Religious attributes also determine someone in choosing a leader in NTB. The issue of religion and religious identity that causes the election of candidate candidates is a reality that can be seen, because the NTB population is predominantly Muslim so that religious attributes are the determinants as explained by informant Fahrurrozi Dahlan that:

*Yes, it cannot be separated from religious attributes as an attraction for constituents to choose their choice, such as the Nahdlatul Wathan, Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah and so on are symbols of Islamic mass organizations engaged in education, social, and da'wah even though according to the AD/ART they are not involved in practical politics. The Islamic identities of these organizations have always been the identities for electing governors and regents/mayors and are so attached that they have become an attraction for local democracy (Interview on August 14, 2024).*

*In reality, Islamic mass organizations in NTB, especially Nahdlatul Wathan (NW) and Nahdlatul Watahan Diniyah Islamiyah (NWDI), were dragged along by the current of political parties. The NW mass organization stated its affiliation with the Gerindra Party and NWDI affiliated with the Perindo Party. The political choice was considered realistic because the two mass organizations were the largest Islamic mass organizations in the NTB region, especially in Lombok. Although the Islamic mass organizations were not political parties, their positions and positions were very important to compete for. The number of masses, the level of cohesiveness and the strong emotional ties of the congregation with their leaders became the attraction of each gubernatorial candidate and each political party that wanted to be in power. Socio-religious organizations as strong social groups (group pressure) that have congregations or masses with a high level of loyalty. When mass organizations openly support certain candidates who can direct voters in the regional election contestation, it provides an opportunity for actors to play and manage vote bases. This is emphasized by the statement of informant Ahyar Fadli that whoever is nominated as governor, religious identities and religious organizations are a necessity that must be approached such as NU, NW, NWDI, Muhammadiyah, Tarbiyah Islamiyah and others. In the context of NTB, all elements of society must be approached if they want to win and are very functional to become a vote bank (Interview on August 21, 2024).*

Therefore, the phenomenon of identity politics that developed in the NTB gubernatorial election was not only an identity based on religion and ethnicity, but the identity of religious mass organizations also played a role in every political event. According to one of the informants, Nazar Na'ami, the



existence of the largest Islamic religious mass organization in NTB that is affiliated with a political party such as Nahdlatul Wathan to the Gerindra party has influence down to *the grassroots*. He even had one command in mobilizing the Nahdliyin congregation for "*sami'na wa atho'na*" from top to bottom. Likewise, the Nahdlatul Wathan Diniyah Islamiyah mass organization that joined the Perindo party can change the local political constellation. These two religious mass organizations are quite influential in politics in NTB because they have a large mass base through the network of Islamic boarding schools, tuan guru and majlis taklim. Meanwhile, NU, Muhammadiyah and other mass organizations are not openly affiliated with political parties or are softer *but* their existence is also very much taken into account.

The description and statements of the informants above further clarify the role of religious mass organization identity in the realm of practical politics has a significant role. Religious mass organizations are a forum for society to build social strength in order to form quality human beings. On the other hand, when religious mass organizations enter the realm of practical politics, there is the potential for polarization in a contestation arena. Political support by mass organizations will utilize their influence to gain benefits from relationships with supported candidates.

### ***Elite identity***

The existence of the elites above has an extraordinary influence on the habitus of figures because it becomes an important part of the political instrument. The dynamics of local politics often provide an affirmation of the involvement of elites or figures in influencing the choices of the community where they have a power base in guiding and directing the community according to their segments. This is as explained by Jamaludin Rifai that:

*To what extent is the instrument read by prospective candidates? I consider it a political instrument that part of politics is approaching influential figures, both intellectually and socially, economically and culturally. Intellectuals have religious study groups, that has become part of the political instrument. The intellectual influence of social figures often socializes, cultural figures, traditional figures, at least their communities will greatly influence voter preferences. This political instrument has its own segments, for example the Sasak Customary Assembly (MAS) Laskar Sasak, then the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN). Those are all communities that are communally divided into small instruments which each have their own segmentation (Interview on August 14, 2024).*

The existence of formal elite and informal elite habitus can control votes because they are trusted by the community. The synergy between religious elites (*Tuan Guru*), political elites, traditional elites and other elements can produce works in an arena of power. With such a position, they can influence the development of society in a mutually symbiotic relationship. In the local context, their influence is considered important in the circulation of power in the form of political support in the political constellation at the local level. The involvement of local elites in the election process cannot be avoided, because they have sources of power in the local political arena, both directly and indirectly. Therefore, politics is how to effectively manage all potential resources/capital as Bourdieu's conception, according to their respective roles so that they can produce dominance in an arena of power struggle.

If we look at the network and support of local elites for the three pairs of candidates for governor and deputy governor of NTB who are running for the governor and deputy governor seats, including: Sitti Rohmi Djalilah-HW Musyafirin, there are figures such as Umi Hj. Sitti Rahun (daughter of TGKH. Muhammad Zainuddin Abdul Madjid, founder of Nahdlatul Wathan), Lalu Hardian Irfani (member of the Indonesian House of Representatives from the PKB faction) and a number of other important figures. While Zulkieflimasyah-Moh. Suhaili also has the figures of tuan guru bajang M. Zainul Majdi (former governor of NTB for two terms and general chairman of PB NWDI) and tuan guru haji Ibnu

Kholil (member of the Indonesian Regional Representative Council), as well as a number of other important figures. Then the candidate pair Lalu Muhamad Iqbal-Indah Damayatin Putri also has figures such as, RTGB Lalu Gede Muhammad Zainuddin Atsani (Chairman of PBNW), Moh. Ali Bin Dachlan (NGO figure and two-term regent of East Lombok), Fahri Hamzah (former deputy chairman of the Indonesian House of Representatives) and a number of figures from supporting parties.

The names of the local elites above illustrate that there is a social space where individuals interact in it according to their respective positions following the capital they have. In that social space, each individual tries to occupy a dominant position. One important aspect in the victory of the Lalu Muhamad Iqbal and Indah Damayanti Putri pair is inseparable from the role of habitus and the capital they have. Moreover, there is support from elites who have charisma and strong influence in society. With the abilities and influence they have their existence can be a reference for the community to choose. The presence of local elites in the political arena to support one of the candidate pairs also plays a big role in gaining people's votes. This is also inseparable from their image which has a good reputation in social life so that it is not uncommon for people to ask for guidance from them.

### **Customary Identity**

Customary identity is one of the cultural entities that thrives in Indonesia, which has 17,000 islands from Sabang to Merauke, so it has a variety of cultures. This cultural diversity is what makes Indonesia rich in customs and traditions, making it unique. In every region in Indonesia, there is a unity of indigenous communities with various characteristics. The diversity of customs and cultures is one of the valuable assets for the Indonesian nation that reflects a pluralistic society. The practice of cultural and customary values can influence the entire life order of individuals and groups (organizations). Their existence can accommodate all the potential and interests of the community or organization. In the context of NTB, the customary identity that is incorporated in the *Sasak Customary Council* (MAS) which has a commitment to maintaining the dignity of inclusive Sasak traditions and culture has a special place in the NTB gubernatorial election contest. An informant, Lalu Maksum Ahmad, explained that:

*For the Sasak Customary Council, those who are committed to preserving customs, traditions, and culture will have a special place whether spoken or unspoken. By prioritizing the principles of objectivity, justice, and equality. The point is that the indigenous community cannot remain silent. It must take an important role because of its obligation to maintain the dignity of customs and traditions. MAS has a moral responsibility to maintain and oversee the political process in NTB so that it runs fairly and responsibly (Interview June 5, 2024).*

The statement above shows that in the regional election contest, customary identity is an entity that receives attention so that it can contribute to the preferences of community voters. Customary identity must prioritize inclusive, objective principles and be based on cultural values in order to maintain and oversee the local political democracy process. The existence of customary communities is a fundamental element for identity and culture that is based on the personality of the nation. Custom plays an important role in various aspects of community life including leadership and governance at the local level.

### **The role of habitus, structure and capital**

Furthermore, the habitus and structure possessed by the three candidates for governor and deputy governor of NTB play an important role in influencing voters in each of their identity segments, so that habitus and structure play a significant role in the contestation process by producing new identity political practices that can influence voters. In this study, it is then referred to as social practice according to Pierre Bourdieu's theory (1977). Habitus and structure have a very significant role in

influencing the political preferences of the people in NTB in the 2024 gubernatorial and deputy gubernatorial election arena. The influence of habitus and structure is quite significant on the results that will be obtained in a contestation, even though it involves identity variants as an instrument in capitalizing support. In a case study on the 2024 gubernatorial election in NTB which involved identity variant contestation, so the role of habitus and structure can be seen from the support given to the supported candidate.

If we look at the data and interview results above, it shows that voter preferences in the 2024 NTB gubernatorial election in NTB are not only in the form of votes, but also various winning efforts made by the community to win their candidate pairs. According to Bourdieu, an actor must continuously utilize various capitals in the arena. The role of an agent (actor) is very dependent on his habitus to influence a series of social events. The role of habitus in influencing voters is quite significant, especially those involved in the arena who have sufficient modalities to influence voters. In Bourdieu's concept, the dialectical relationship between habitus and social structure is what will form a practice. So, the relationship between habitus and structure that is dialectical in nature becomes the main capital in order to influence and move the choice in choosing the candidate pair for governor and deputy governor of NTB 2024 with various identity variants used. To strengthen the influence of the actor's habitus on voters, the actors (agents) will continue to produce political practices to support the candidate, for example NW and NWDI residents in NTB. This has implications for the tendency of the direction of support for the majority of NW leaders to refer to gubernatorial candidate pair number 3, namely Lalu Muhamad Iqbal-Indah Damayati Putri, and for NWDI leaders will refer to candidate pair number 1, namely Hj. Sitti Rohmi Djalilah-HW Musyafirin. And some of the Tuan Guru Bajang M. Zainul Majdi masses are heading towards candidate pair number 2, Zulkieflimasyah-Suhaili.

Efforts to perpetuate the influence of the actor's (agent's) dominance over voters, then the agent (actor) and structure continue to produce political practices so that they become a system of social practices. The battle of regional identity variants (geopolitics), religious identities based on mass organizations, and local elite identities in the 2024 gubernatorial election contest in Lombok NTB is inevitable. These identities have a significant influence in mobilizing votes in the regional elections. Thus, these identity variants are included in the form of capital. In this study, the modalities that are quite influential in the 2024 NTB gubernatorial election are social and cultural capital which are transformed into symbolic capital, in addition to political and economic capital.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the practice of identity politics has become an integral part of Indonesian democracy and is an important factor in influencing election results and the quality of democracy in Indonesia, especially local democracy. The contestation of the 2024 NTB gubernatorial and deputy gubernatorial elections cannot be separated from the orientation of identity politics. The forms of orientation lead to regional identity (geopolitics), religious identity based on religious mass organizations and other local identity variants. This study shows that candidates who have habitus that is in accordance with the characteristics of the community and are able to accumulate and utilize the capital they have well, are the ones who will win a fight. This can be proven in the 2024 NTB gubernatorial election from the victory of Lalu Muhammad Iqbal supported by a coalition of parties that are part of the Advanced Indonesia Coalition (KIM Plus) by defeating incumbents Zulkieflimansyah and Sitti Rohmi Djalilah. In empirical reality, the 2024 NTB gubernatorial election contest is a portrait of local politics that shows that identity politics tends to operate *softly* so that it can provide affiliation of choice and preference to voters. Such a political process is a phenomenon in itself for Indonesian democratization.

### **Acknowledgment**

We acknowledge the help and support of our promotor and co-promotor, families, editor pertanika and team, and loved ones.

### **Funding Statement**

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors

### **Acknowledgement Statement**

I/we certify that the to the work very thanks to; **Editor in Chief, Editorial Board, Editors and Asissten to the Editors, Reviewers, this journal.** Also, to all the people or parties who have helped and whose names we did not have time to write in this article

### **References**

- 1) Alcott, Linda, Martin, (2003). Introduction: Modern and Postmodern Identities, in Alcott Linda Martin and Mendieta, Eduardo (ed.) *Identities: Race, Class, Gender, an Nationality*, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing.
- 2) Anderson, Benedict, (2002). *Imagined Communities*, Translator, Omi Intan Naomi, Yogyakarta: INSIST.
- 3) Aspinall, Edward and Fealy, Greg, (2003). *Local Power & Politics in Indonesia: Decentralization & Democratization*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- 4) Berenschot, W & Aspinall, E. (2020). How Clientelism Varies: Comparing Patronage Democracies. *Democratization*, 27(1), 1-19.
- 5) Budiwanti, Erni, (2000). *Islam Wetu Telu Versus Wetu Lima*. Yogyakarta: LkiS.
- 6) Buchari, S. Astuti, (20160). *Ethnic Awakening Towards Identity Politics*, Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- 7) Bourdieu, Pierre & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Chicago: The University of Chicago.
- 8) Bourdieu, Pierre, (1983). *The Field of Cultural Production*, Edited by Randal Johnson, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- 9) Bourdieu, Pierre, (1986). *The Form of Capital, in Hand Book of Theory of Research for Sociology of Education*, Green Word Press.
- 10) Bourdieu, Pierre, (1984). *Distinction: A Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Translated Richard Nice & Kegan Paul, Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- 11) Bourdieu, Pierre, (2002). *From Capital in Economic Sociology*, Nicole Woosley Biggart (Ed), Milden Massachusetts: Blackwell Publisher, Ltd.
- 12) Bourdieu, Pierre, (1977). *Outline of A Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 13) Bourdieu, Pierre, (2011). *Choses Dites: Description & Thoughts*, translation, Ninik Rochani Sjams, Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana.
- 14) Castells, Manuel, (2010). *The Power of Identity: The Information Age Economy, Society, and Culture Volume II*, Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- 15) Choi, Nangyang, (2011). *Local Politics in Indonesia Pathways to Power*, USA and Canada: Routledge. Taylor & Francis Group.
- 16) Creswell, John, W. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches*, Translated by Ahmad Lintang Lazuardi, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- 17) Denzin, Norman, K and Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *Hand Book of Qualitative Research*, Sage Publication Ltd.

- 18) Document of the Report of the NTB Provincial General Election Commission 2024 Regarding the Implementation of the 2024 NTB Governor and Deputy Governor Regional Head Election.
- 19) Emmanuel, Onyebuchi, E., Kingsley, Ekene, O., Emmanuel, Terkimbi, A. (2024). The Federal Character Principle and Political Exclusion of Southeast Nigeria, 2015–2019. *Pertanika J. Soc. Sci. & Hum.* 32 (2): 651 – 674. <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.32.2.14>.
- 20) Ely, G & Aspinall, E. (2003). Introduction: Decentralization, democratization and the rise of the local. In *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia: Decentralization and democratization*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS).
- 21) Field, John, (2004). *Social Capital*, translated by Nurhadi, Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana.
- 22) Fashri, Fauzi, (2014). *Pierre Bordieu: Responding to the Power of Symbols*, Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- 23) Geertz, Clifford, (1963). The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New State, in *Old Societies and New State*, New York: Free Press.
- 24) Gidden, Anthony, (1991). *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford: California University Press.
- 25) Haboddin, Muhtar, (2012). Strengthening Identity Politics in the Local Realm, *Journal of Development Studies*, Volume 3 Number 1, February.
- 26) Hadiz, Vedi, R. (2010). *Localizing Power in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: A Southeast Asia Perspective*. Stanford University Press.
- 27) Harker, Richard, Maher, Cheelen and Wilkes, Chris, (2009). *(Habitus Capital + Domain = Practice: The Most Comprehensive Introduction to Pierre Bourdieu's Thought*, Translated by Pipit Maizer, Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- 28) Haryatmoko. (2003). Revealing Cultural Falsehoods: Theoretical Basis of Social Movements According to Pierre Bourdieu, in *BASIS Magazine No. 11-12 Year 52, November-December*.
- 29) Haralambos, M. H. M. and Heald, Robin, (2000). *Sociology Thems and Perspectives, Fifth Edition*, London: Collins Educational.
- 30) Hall, Stuart. (1992). "Who Needs Identity", in Hall and Du Gay, P (eds), *The Question of Cultural Identity*, London: Sage.
- 31) Holtzappel, C. J. G. & Ramstedt, M. (2010). *Decentralization and Regional Autonomy in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS.
- 32) Irsan, (2015). *Ethnic Relations and Political Contestation in Regency Redistricting: A Case Study of Local Elites in Pringsewu Province of Lampung Indonesia*. Dissertation at Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- 33) Joseph, Ching Velasco., Jhazmin, Joi C. Manguera., Eunice Julia V. Navalán., Julianna Nicole C. Limchiko., Trixie Anne Marie D. Bayot., and Marjorie Grace V. Mercado. (2024). The Digital Dynamics of Political Engagement Among Filipino Youth: Examining Participation in Social Media Platforms. *Pertanika J. Soc. Sci. & Hum.* 32 (3): 1051 – 1071. <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.32.3.12>.
- 34) Kayun, I. Nengah, (1986). *Traditional Economic System as a Manifestation of Active Community Response to the Environment of the West Nusa Tenggara Region*. Mataram: Department of Culture and Regional Cultural Inventory and Documentation Project.
- 35) Kingsley, Jeremy J. (2015). Redrawing Lines of Religious Authority in Lombok, Indonesia, *Asian Journal of Social Science* 42 (2014) 657–677.
- 36) Klinken, Gery, V. (2007). *Small Town Wars: Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia*, Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- 37) Klinken, Gerry, V. (2009). Patronage Democracy in Provincial Indonesia. In *Rethinking Popular Representation* (pp. 141-159). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

- 38) Kumbara, A. A, Ngr. Anom, (1008). Identity Construction of the Sasak People in East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, *Journal of Humanities, Volume 20 No. October 3 (2008)* 315-326.
- 39) Lincoln & Guba, (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Beverly Hill: Sage Publication.
- 40) Lawler, Steph. (2021). *Identity: A Sociological Perspective*, translated by Medhy Aginta Hidayat, Yogyakarta: Cantrik Pustaka.
- 41) Kacung. (2006). *Democratization in the Regions: Lessons from Direct Regional Elections*, Surabaya: Pustaka Eureka and PusDeHAM.
- 42) Kacung. (2019). *Indonesian Political System: Consolidation of Democracy after the New Order*. Jakarta: Kencana.
- 43) Muhtadi, Burhanuddin. (2018). Identity Politics and the Myth of Rational Voters, *MAARIF Institute for Culture and Humanity Vol. 13, No. 2 — December 2018*, 68-86.
- 44) Milles, Mathew, B & Huberman, Michail, (1992). *Qualitative Data Analysis* , Jakarta: UI Press.
- 45) Neuman, W. Lawrence, (2000). *Social Research Methods Qualitative and Quantitative Approach*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- 46) Nordholt, Henk Schulte. (2008). Identity Politics, Citizenship and the Soft State in Indonesia: An Essay, *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities, Vol. 1, 2008*, pp. 1–21.
- 47) Nord, holt, Henk Schulte, & Klinken, Gerry, V. (2007). *Local Politics in Indonesia*, Translator Bernard Hidayat, Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, KITLV.
- 48) Owen, Thian Seng Yeo1., Mohd Johari Mohd Yusof1., Sreetheran Maruthaveeran., Kei Saito., and Junainah Abu Kasim. (2023). A Review of Policies and Regulations of Green Infrastructure Establishment in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. *Pertanika J. Soc. Sci. & Hum.* 31 (2): 561 – 584. <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.31.2.06>.
- 49) Qodir, Zuly. (2012). Political Involution of Expansion, Ethnicity and Religion: Challenges of Bureaucratic Reform in the Case of North Maluku, *Journal of Government Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Vol. 4. No. 4*, pp. 217-226.
- 50) Rahimandani. (2014). *Voting Preferences in the Bengkulu City Regional Election Based on Ethnic Background*, Dissertation in the Social Sciences Doctoral Program, Airlangga University, Surabaya.
- 51) Ramstedt, Martin & Tufail, Fadjar. I. (2011). *Identity Confusion: Religion, Ethnicity, and Citizenship in the Post-New Order Era* , Jakarta: Gramedia Widiasaran Indonesia.
- 52) Ritzer, George, (2014). *Sociological Theory From Classical Sociology to the Latest Postmodern Developments*, Translator, Saut Pasaribu, Rh. Widodo, Eka Adi Nugraha, Yogyakarta : Pustaka Pelajar
- 53) Ritzer, George and Barry, Smart (2011). *Handbook of Social Theory* , Translator, Imam Muttaqien et al., Bandung: Nusa Media.
- 54) Romli, Lili, (2019). Political Identity and Challenges for Democratic Consolidation in Indonesia, *Indonesian Political Science Review 4 (1), January 2019*, pp. 78-98.
- 55) Romli, Lili, (2019). *Elections in the Reform Era and the Configuration of Political Party Power Maps*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- 56) Rogers, Mary, F. (1996), *Multicultural Experience, Multicultural T h e o r i e s*, New York: McGraw -Hill.
- 57) Sayuti, Rosiady and Langitan, Muhammad. F. (2006). *The Journey of a Sasak Man to Become Governor: A Flashback to the 2003 NTB Gubernatorial Election*, Mataram: Pantheon Media Pressindo-LARISPA.
- 58) Scruton, Roger. (2013). *Political Dictionary*, Translator, Ahmad Lintang Lazuardi, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.

- 59) Sparring, Daniel. (2005). *Multiregionalism as an Alternative Response to Identity Politics and Transformative Conflict Resolution: A Political Sociology Perspective*, Paper presented at a short course and training on Human Rights and Democracy organized by CEASS in collaboration with NCHR-Oslo University, Norway, Yogyakarta, 28 November- 2 December 2005.
- 60) Suaib, Eka. (2005). *Ethnicity of Public Policy: A Study of Ethnicity in Local Political Competition in Kendari City*, Dissertation in the Social Science Doctoral Program, Airlangga University, Surabaya.
- 61) Strauus & Corbin, (1990). *Basic Qualitative: Grounded Theory Procedure and Technique*, New Bury Park: Sage Publication.
- 62) Sjaf, Sofyan. (2012). The Formation of Identity Politics in the Local Political Economy Arena , *Sodality: Journal of Rural Sociology* , Vol. 6, No. 2 September 2012.
- 63) Tanasaldy, Taufiq. (2007). Ethnic Identity Politics in West Kalimantan, in Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry van Klinken (eds.) *Local Politics in Indonesia*, Translated by Bernard Hidayat, Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia-KITLV.
- 64) Tirta, Sudarmo, R. (2005). Ethno-Political Dimensions of Regional Expansion and Regional Elections: Several Notes and Thoughts, *Journal of Society and Culture*, Volume VII, No. 1, 2005.
- 65) Usman, Sunyoto, (2018). *Social Capital*, Yogyakarta: Student Library.
- 66) Vel, Jacqueline, A. C, (2008). *Umma Politics: An Ethnography of Democratization in West Sumba Indonesia 1998-2006*, Leiden: KITLV Press.
- 67) Wibowo, A, Setyo. (2024). Exposing Neofeudalism, in *BASIS Magazine*, Number 11-12, Year 73.
- 68) Yin, Robert, K. (1993). *Application of Case Studies Research*, Sage Publications.