

Political Communication Strategies of Islamist Parties as Educational Platforms for PKS Women Politicians

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Abstract

Given the pervasive influence of patriarchy in politics, women in the political arena must be equipped to address the various challenges that come with it. Therefore, there is a need for political education tailored to their specific needs. Women's political representation plays a vital role in advancing democracy. This study investigated political communication strategies and ideologies of Islamist parties in Indonesia, with a focus on enhancing female politicians' voters through political education. One of the Islamic parties in this research is the Prosperous Justice Party, also known as Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS). The study employed a qualitative approach as the primary research method. The research suggests that Islamic parties can enhance their political communication strategies by integrating their political ideology. This political ideology can be transformed into guiding principles and spiritual development platforms that serve as a form of political education for political party cadres. This study highlights the challenges faced by those who may be reluctant to fully support women in politics. The strategy employed by PKS does not involve the abandonment of its core party ideology but rather focuses on reinforcing and promoting this ideology among its cadres and sympathizers through effective da'wah and cadre development.

Keywords: *PKS, political communication, political parties, political education, women politicians*

Introduction

As the general election approaches, various political parties employ diverse strategies to enhance their electoral prospects. This trend is observed not only in Singapore, the United States of America, the UK, and Japan, but also in Korea, as documented by UMEDA (2023), Temple & Langer (2023), Chin (2023), and Karami et al.(2022). Various political parties are actively formulating and developing their political strategies to enhance their electoral prospects. Furthermore, as general elections approach, political parties engage in candidate campaigns

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wherein they articulate and present their vision and mission to the electorate. Unfortunately, certain political parties continue to employ negative tactics, tarnishing the reputation of their political rivals (Teele et al., 2018). Furthermore, female candidates participating in general elections frequently encounter discriminatory treatment. This situation is not limited to Indonesia but is also observed in European and Asian countries (Arvate et al., 2021). Therefore, it is crucial for political parties to provide political education, particularly to female politicians running in general elections. This is due to existing stereotypes regarding female candidates. Folke et al. (2020) suggest that gender quotas might result in a temporary overrepresentation of dynastic women. Nevertheless, every woman has an equal right to participate in general elections (O'Brien, 2019). In Arab countries, political representation is strengthened by implementing quotas for women to increase their representation in parliament (Bargain et al., 2019).

In Indonesia, the political representation of women is governed by Law No. 10 of 2008 on general elections. According to Article 8, Paragraph (1), Letter C, this law stipulates that political parties must ensure that at least 30% of their leadership positions are occupied by women (Lestari et al., 2019). Despite the regulations related to representation in political parties, it appears that women voters in general elections were not significantly influenced. Blackman & Jackson (2021) showed that voters tend to favor candidates who prioritize security issues over women's rights. Politics is a collective endeavor aimed at creating a harmonious, safe, peaceful, and prosperous society. In this regard, political parties have a pivotal role in political education for their party members and the general public (Kabasakal Arat, 2017). Engaging in politics and providing political education is a strategic approach for the state, as it encourages community participation in the state management process (Persson et al., 2016). Besides that, political education is intertwined with the internalization of values, as individuals learn about and become integrated into a culture, forming a crucial aspect of their self-concept (Akmal, 2018; Johnson & Sdunzik, 2023).

Political education serves as a critical component of the political structure, with the primary goal of enhancing people's political knowledge, enabling them to engage effectively (Badaru & Adu, 2021; Chakim, 2022; Darolia, 2020; Öztürk, İ., 2021). Consequently, political education functions as a mechanism for actively involving individuals in the political system, facilitating their participation in expressing their demands and providing support.

Political parties typically fulfill various functions, serving as a conduit for political communication, mechanisms for political socialization, platforms for political recruitment, and

mediators in conflict management. Ideology plays a crucial in garnering public interest in these political parties (Hellström, 2008). Moreover, a party's ideology can significantly influence its standing in the eyes of the community (Marcos-Marne et al., 2020). Moreover, their presence is expected to create opportunities for women to participate in the development and implementation of equitable policies through gender quotas (Campbell, 2016). Furthermore, the role of female politicians in introducing party ideology is pivotal to conducting political communication with voters and increasing the votes for female politicians, which can also potentially enhance the party's image.

The perception of labeling female politicians as "incompetent" leaders persists today (Krauss & Kroeber, 2020). However, PKS provided political representation to women in 2019, with 212 women being elected out of 533 legislative candidates (Umagapi, 2020). This number is considered relatively high and has exceeded the minimum required quota for women's representation, which is set at 30%. This makes PKS one of the largest parties that has offered opportunities for women to actively participate in the political arena in Indonesia. With numerous female representatives, significant opportunities are available for them to secure parliamentary seats. However, this achievement cannot be realized without the support of voters. Therefore, the significance of holding a substantial number of seats in formal political institutions is contingent on the role of female politician voters (Spary, 2020).

Unfortunately, women voters encounter obstacles that lead them to favor male politicians, primarily due to the dominant patriarchal culture. Women voters often have to rely on the information provided by male candidates to assess the performance, abilities, and behavior of politicians (Ahmad & Anawar 2018). Thus, traditional gender relations in society are crucial to realizing the full potential of women in their political participation. To enhance this potential, adopting effective political party strategies for increasing the representation of women is essential. This approach enables female politicians to effectively convey their messages, motivating voters to vote for them. Conveying meaning is an active process, especially when it comes to women politicians delivering the ideology of their party (Leech, 1974). Clarity in conveying this ideology is crucial, both for party members and the voting public. In the context of an Islamic party, PKS managed to increase its voter share from 6.79% in 2014 to 8.21% in 2019 through effective communication of its ideology (Ahmad & Anawar, 2018). As a result of this increase, PKS managed to secure 1.42% more of the vote share, making it the eighth-ranked party out of the 16

participating in the general election. This achievement is significant as it positions PKS among the top 10 parties and highlights its standing as one of the two Islamic parties in this group.

Interpreting the ideology of political parties, particularly an Islamic party like PKS, based on these data, requires an in-depth analysis. The task of increasing the participation of women voters is undoubtedly a challenging one. As indicated by several previous studies, gender stereotypes persist in campaigns conducted by women and men (Kotzaivazoglou et al., 2018; van der Pas, 2021; Greene et al., 2022).

Men are often characterized as successful and dynamic figures with a perceived superior ability to lead compared to female politicians (Kotzaivazoglou et al., 2018). Thus, political parties play a crucial role in implementing strategies to shape public perceptions of female politicians' personalities, appearance, and professional capabilities (Szlovak, 2017). This is essential because women and men exhibit different political participation characteristics. Meanwhile, men tend to be more actively engaged in political party activities (Beauregard, 2016). Furthermore, Seeberg et al. (2016) described the challenges faced by voters in comprehending and processing information related to the behavior of political parties. This is because the behavior of political parties can significantly affect their political choices.

Klüver & Sagarzazu (2016) proposed a political strategy to increase political representation by prioritizing the addressing of constituents' issues. Thus, political parties not only listen to the concerns of voters and pledge solutions during their campaigns but also persist in monitoring the evolution of these issues. Even though regulations mandating the minimum quota of women in political parties have been enacted in Indonesia, it remains essential for political parties to implement strategies that facilitate and enhance the political representation of women. Members of PKS, being an Indonesian Islamic party, face the challenge of not only meeting the quota for women's participation but also effectively conveying and interpreting their ideology in a way that resonates with the community. Therefore, the objective of this study was to analyze the political communication strategy of Islamist parties as a form of political education for female politicians within PKS.

Research Questions

Given this context, the study explores the complex processes of political communication inside Islamist organizations, with a particular emphasis on the training methods used for female politicians in PKS. The investigation is guided by the following research questions:

1. Building on the previously outlined background, the following research questions were addressed: What political communication strategy do Islamist parties employ to educate PKS female politicians?
2. How is the PKS ideology used as part of the political communication strategy for female politicians?

Literature Review

Islamic Parties in the Indonesian Context

Islam's role in Indonesia's political landscape has been significant, dating back to its involvement in the country's fight for independence and continuing to influence political developments today. As a result, Islam's contributions to the political sphere remain a crucial aspect of Indonesia's political life.

The development of Islamic political parties in Indonesia can be attributed to several factors, such as the country's robust religious foundation and the prevailing social realities. Moreover, it offers a vision and ideology that facilitates the integration of Islam into political and national life. Islam is compatible with democratic values. It upholds principles including human rights, equality, and egalitarianism. In the 1955 elections, the Islamic party secured a significant number of parliamentary seats and played a role in forming the government. During the reform era, Islamic parties continued to play an essential role. This period witnessed the emergence of numerous Islamic-based political parties, as noted by the General Elections Commission. However, it's important to mention that several nationalist parties based on non-Islamic ideologies also existed alongside them (Hamayotsu, 2011).

PKS was founded by *da'wah* activists in the 1980s. They recognized the opportunity to establish a political party in 1997 after engaging in *da'wah* and social activities through campus and social networks. This decision was partly in response to the perceived limitations on the expression of Islamic principles within practical political parties (Tanuwidjaja, 2012). PKS is recognized for embracing the teachings of Hasan Al-Banna and other prominent Middle Eastern intellectuals. Al-Banna, an Egyptian spiritual figure, established the Muslim Brotherhood organization in 1928 (Jung, 2014).

As an Islamic-based party, PKS is structured with a Central Leadership Council, Sharia Council, and Party Advisory Council. These councils consist of individuals with active or passive connections to the Middle East region, whether they have studied there as students or worked there formally or informally (Hwang, 2010).

Women in Politics

Women in politics continue to face the challenges posed by deeply ingrained patriarchal cultural norms (Grewal, 2020). These cultural norms can hinder women's political involvement and discourage them from participating in politics. In a political context, societal political movements are continually evolving, leading to the adoption of various strategic measures aimed at bolstering political rights. From a legal standpoint, it is important to recognize that women's political rights are inherently human rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly states that everyone has the right to participate in the government of their own country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives. In essence, these guarantees of political rights affirm the existing open political space for women.

Despite the persistent influence of a patriarchal culture, women in politics continue their efforts to advocate for political rights and representation in decision-making (Billo, 2020). For female politicians, the meaning of politics has evolved beyond being an arena for power struggles. It is now viewed as a platform where women, as individuals, interpret politics as a forum for pursuing the aspirations of serving the public, particularly the interests of women (Cardo, 2021). Therefore, women should actively engage in politics without hesitating to compete with men, as they possess equal capabilities.

Women play a significant role in politics concerning policy, power, and development issues. According to Smith et al. (2011), the involvement of women in politics signifies providing them with the opportunity to actively contribute to the formulation of public policies. The challenges encountered by society are inherently intertwined with those faced by women. Conversely, women's issues are inherently societal concerns. Therefore, it is imperative for women to shape their perspectives in the decision-making and process and assert their influence over political decisions autonomously. However, the evolution of women in politics is intertwined with broader social and political transformations (Neundorf & Shorrocks, 2021). Aspinall et al. (2021) have

shown that certain female politicians consciously utilize symbols of femininity and Islamic piety, such as the headscarf or hijab, as a strategy to increase their electoral support.

Political Communication Strategy

The political ideology of a party plays a crucial role in shaping political strategies (Rashkova & Spirova, 2014). Ideology represents an in-depth and comprehensive set of beliefs and values shared by a community about what is morally just and right, guiding people's behavior in society (Freeden, 2006).

Political ideology can serve as a unique identity for a political party, making it easily distinguishable from others, especially in the eyes of voters with the right to choose. Ideology encompasses dimensions of reality, idealism, and flexibility (Alfian 1992). Thus, as communicators, members of political parties must exercise discretion in transmitting rejecting, repeating, or summarizing messages to ensure they resonate effectively with the recipients (Fowler & Hagar, 2013).

All related communication elements are also considered in the communication strategy. Various models of interrelationship depend on the contextual dynamics governing the relationships among these elements in the communication event, as further elaborated by Applebaum & Anatol (1974), including:

- (1) the source-receiver relationship, which pertains to the relationship determined by communication's intent,
- (2) the source–environment relationship, addressing the social, political, and cultural effects on the communicator within specific communication situations,
- (3) the receiver–environment relationship, which refers to the social, political, and cultural effects on a set of psychological factors in the recipient, and
- (4) the receiver–message relationship, which refers to the communication effect that appears on the recipient caused by the form, content, and presentation of the message.

Thus, the primary factor in developing an effective and efficient political communication strategy relies heavily on the context and environment in which political communication occurs (Syahputra & Hafiar, 2019).

Political parties should engage in political education to ensure that their members are knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities as citizens, a process known as political socialization. This involves imparting knowledge about political matters (Svåsand, 2014).

In the communication process between political parties, which act as sources or communicators, and their recipients, verbal and non-verbal messages are influenced by the frame of reference and field of experience (López-García & Pavía, 2018). As a result, political organizations, like political parties, need to carefully consider the impact of message content, language sequencing, and symbolic representation in their communications.

Method

Research Design

This research employs a qualitative approach, as it seeks to comprehensively understand and investigate the political communication strategies of Islamist parties in Indonesia and their role in providing political education to PKS women politicians. Therefore, the investigation was primarily focused on observing members and female politicians within PKS. Thus, researchers employed a case study research design (Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2017) to analyze the behavior of PKS female politicians and their political communication strategies. This research utilized interviews to explore how the language, communication, and ideology of female politicians come together to influence their distinctive behavior and attract support from sympathizers in the context of a general election. This research was conducted between October 2021 and February 2023.

Participants

The research included 22 participants, comprising 10 PKS cadres, 10 PKS sympathizers, and two female politicians. Among the participants, 12 were female, and 10 were male, with ages ranging from 32 to 46 years old. The participants had diverse educational backgrounds, including 10 with bachelor's degrees, five master's degrees, three doctoral degrees, and four who were senior high school graduates.

Table 1

Participants

Participants	Gender		Educational Background			
	Male	Female	BA	MA	PhD	Senior High School
PKS cadres	3	6	3	2	-	4
PKS sympathizers	7	4	7	3	1	-
Politicians	-	2	-	-	2	-
Total	10	12	10	5	3	4

The participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The selected participants met specific criteria: They had known PKS for more than three years, were active as cadres and participants in the PKS Depok City, and had participated in *liqo* activities. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, a deliberate and strategic approach chosen for its ability to target specific individuals who possess unique perspectives and experiences relevant to the research objectives (Yin, 2018). Purposive sampling is particularly advantageous in this study as it allows for the intentional inclusion of individuals who hold key roles within the context of interest. In this case, the inclusion of 10 PKS cadres, 10 PKS sympathizers, and two female politicians ensures a diverse representation across different stakeholder groups, offering a comprehensive understanding of the language, communication, and ideology dynamics within the realm of women politicians during a general election.

Data Collection

Observation

Researchers actively engaged in a variety of party activities, such as da'wah (preaching or outreach programs) and *liqo* (group debates), while carrying out the observation. The researchers were able to engage with participants and fully immerse themselves in the circumstances thanks to this participatory technique, which helped them understand the nuances of political communication within PKS. To guarantee a thorough comprehension of the underlying dynamics, the observations were conducted 5 times.

During the observation sessions, particular attention was paid to the methods of political communication used and the nature of political education provided to female politicians inside PKS. The study focuses on communication strategies, messaging content, and the impact of PKS ideology in shaping these interactions. The collecting of field notes is incorporated into the study to improve the depth and context of the study. The research is focused on communication strategies, messaging content, and the role of PKS ideology in shaping these encounters. Through close observation and immersion in the contexts of the participants, field notes are gathered that help to provide a more nuanced picture of the complex dynamics and lived experiences that may not be fully represented through interviews alone (Yin, 2018). This all-encompassing strategy seeks to disentangle the ways in which language, communication, and ideology interact to shape

the unique behaviors of female politicians and affect their capacity to win over voters in a general election.

The observations weren't restricted to one specific case but were repeated several times to capture the diversity and change of practices throughout time. These observations were extensively documented in field notes, providing a rich supply of qualitative data. Details such as participant involvement, verbal and nonverbal communication patterns, and any visible shifts or consistency in PKS's political education strategies were captured in these field notes. The observation approach was designed to provide a nuanced and in-depth study of the political communication dynamics within the party, as well as its specific impact on the education of female politicians affiliated with PKS.

Interview

Researchers utilized a semi-structured format for in-depth interviews with the participants, employing an interview protocol as a guide to collect qualitative data for the study. At the initiation of each interview, the researcher introduced themselves and offered an overview of the interview's topic. To enhance accuracy and thorough documentation, an agreement was established with the participants to record the interviews. These recorded sessions, along with accompanying transcripts, served as valuable resources for meticulous analysis and interpretation in the study.

The researcher prepared a set of five questions relevant to the research theme as a semi-structured interview. These questions were designed to explore the political communication strategy employed by PKS based on their ideology, considering dimensions as outlined by Alfian (1992):

- 1) What type of political communication strategy do Islamist parties employ as political education for PKS female politicians?
- 2) How is the ideology incorporated into this strategy?
- 3) How are the ideals of female politicians in PKS developed within the context of *da'wah*?
- 4) How are the values of PKS conveyed through this strategy?
- 5) How do female politicians interpret the ideology of political party?

Each interview lasted for 45 minutes (Creswell, 2017). The researcher used a recording device to capture the interview process and took written field notes. The interview results were transcribed, including participant information, interviewer details, and interview transcripts. To protect

confidentiality and uphold research ethics, respondents' names were replaced with codes such as A10–A20 (cadres and sympathizers of PKS) and W1-W2 (PKS female politicians).

Based on the interview transcripts, the researchers identified themes in accordance with the research objectives. This process involved identifying themes within the interview data by thoroughly reviewing the interview transcript multiple times until the researcher gained a clear idea (Creswell, 2017) of the political communication strategy as a form of political education in PKS. Furthermore, after the interview, the researcher assured the participants that interview recordings would remain confidential.

This study's interview protocol was essential in helping to direct the participants' semi-structured in-depth interviews. A semi-structured design offers a balance between flexibility and an established framework, enabling the researchers to delve into particular subjects while keeping an open mind to unexpected results. The protocol functioned as a methodical framework, guaranteeing uniformity in the data gathering procedure amongst the interviews and enabling the investigation of principal themes concerning communication strategies, messaging substance, and the influence of PKS ideology on the conduct of female politicians in a general election.

The researchers made sure to introduce themselves and give a brief summary of the topic of the interview at the beginning of each interview in order to build rapport. It's likely that this initial stage helped to establish a comfortable environment for participants, which encouraged honest and open communication.

The researchers obtained consent from the participants to record the interviews in order to guarantee accuracy and comprehensive documentation. This choice enabled for the recording of minute variations in expression, tone, and conversation while still preserving the depth of the participants' stories. The transcripts that were carefully written to go along with the recorded sessions proved to be very helpful in the analysis and interpretation that followed.

Essentially, the semi-structured format, the interview methodology, and the use of recording equipment all represent a methodological approach meant to systematically collect comprehensive qualitative data (Yin, 2018). This method allows for a more thorough and rigorous analysis of the data collected later on, allowing for a more nuanced examination of the complex interactions between language, communication, ideology, and the unique behaviors of female politicians during a general election. It also makes data collection more consistent.

Trustworthiness of Data

Ensuring the trustworthiness of the data was a paramount consideration in this study. To fortify the validity of the obtained information, the researchers implemented triangulation techniques, which involved cross-referencing data from diverse sources. The research employs data triangulation. Data triangulation involves cross-referencing information from diverse sources to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings (Yin, 2018). In this case, the researchers implemented triangulation techniques by comparing and corroborating data gathered from different informants. This multifaceted approach aimed to corroborate and validate the findings by comparing information gathered from different informants, thereby strengthening the overall reliability of the collected data.

Participatory observation and in-depth interviews are employed as independent data-gathering procedures, adding a supplementary layer of triangulation. The researchers used this dual-method approach to capitalize on the inherent strengths of each method, resulting in a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the political communication strategies used by Islamist parties for the political education of female politicians within PKS. The utilization of data triangulation in the search highlights the data's reliability. In this case, triangulation is a combination of information from multiple perspectives, which verifies the study's findings. The particular type of reliability under discussion is frequently called triangulated or inter-method reliability. By verifying results from other sources or methodologies, this kind of reliability is attained, which reduces the possibility that the conclusions are only the product of a certain study strategy or methodology. Essentially, by including several perspectives and sources of data, the triangulated analytical lens improves the reliability and trustworthiness of the study's conclusions.

Data Analysis

In line with the methodological approach pioneered by Robert K. Yin (2018) in case study research, the analysis techniques employed by the researchers adhered to the principles of examining, categorizing and testing. The examining phase involved the identification of key themes within the research findings, facilitating interpretations that delved into crucial aspects such as PKS's political communication strategy and the influence of PKS ideology on political education. Following Yin's framework, the second stage involved the categorizing of all data derived from both observations and interviews, laying a comprehensive foundation for subsequent

analysis. In the final stage, testing was employed by the researcher based on the synthesized research findings, adhering to the systematic and rigorous analytical process advocated by the case study methodology.

Findings

Political Communication Strategy of PKS as Political Education for Women Politicians

Fulfilling the 30 percent quota for women that political parties in Indonesia are required to meet presents a challenge for PKS in encouraging women to participate in general elections. This challenge is particularly pronounced for PKS as an Islamist party. The following are the research findings related to PKS's political communication strategy as political education for female politicians.

Female cadres in PKS receive political education based on PKS ideology. The political communication strategy involves activities such as liqo and da'wah (A13, PKS cadre, interviewed 2023). In general, the political education offered by PKS is a component of their political communication strategy, with a focus on observing problems in the surrounding environment. These observations can also be made during da'wah activities (A12, PKS cadre, interviewed 2023). Each PKS cadre, both women and men, undergoes weekly training with a predetermined curriculum. This regular training helps build intellectual capacity, enhance moral credibility, and develop personal skills (A11, PKS cadre, interviewed 2021).

The findings of this interview reveal that PKS employs a political communication strategy based on its ideology. This allows female politicians to acquire these communication strategies through *liqo* and *da'wah*. Furthermore, each PKS cadre, regardless of gender, has equal opportunities to receive weekly training in areas such as intellectual capacity, moral credibility, and personal skills. This highlights the party's commitment to providing political education without gender discrimination.

The specified curriculum is oriented toward political education, such as effective political communication strategies to the public. Thus, PKS cadres, whether women or men are expected to prioritize ethical communication (A12, PKS cadre, interviewed 2022). As cadres, we are also trained to build a positive image and attract public attention.

Therefore, coaching activities at PKS are particularly engaging because they offer equal opportunities for all cadres to enhance their intellectual development. Regardless of gender, I, as a woman, feel motivated to concentrate on my political pursuits (A14, PKS cadre, interviewed 2022). At PKS, activities such as da'wah serve as the backbone of political communication strategies, providing political education for both cadres and sympathizers. These activities are typically oriented toward imparting values that can be socialized in society, with clearly defined objectives (A12, PKS cadre, interviewed 2021).

The findings highlight the significance of political education for PKS, which is essential for both female and male cadres. The political communication strategy employed goes beyond mere campaigning; it equips them to address the issues in their surroundings actively. This approach reflects PKS's commitment as an Islamic party to foster a robust political culture, especially for female politicians.

The PKS ideology was incorporated into the cadre recruitment process, primarily through individual recruitment and direct personal communication. Then, as prospective cadres, we receive invitations to engage in spiritual formation forums organized by PKS such as liqo. Thus, Liqo is used as a platform for cadres to share material to exchange information, covering topics from religion to organizational management. (W1, women politician, interviewed 2023). For female politicians, this forum becomes a crucial step in embracing the party's ideology and using it as a reference during the general election process. So, we have undergone training through hierarchical system known marhalah (A15, PKS cadre, interviewed 2023). Within the PKS party, there is an internal party manual titled "Fatwa and Bayan PKS Sharia Council." This manual instructs women to be conscious of their duties and inherent characteristics. Furthermore, these guidelines necessitate our adherence to dressing in accordance with the provisions of sharia, as inspired by Surah Al Ahzab verse 59 (Al-Qur'an) (A16, PKS cadre, interviewed 2022). In my opinion, PKS party's manual provides instructions for female cadres to maintain Iltizam Adab Iltizam adab is the norm for interpersonal communication. Female cadres are expected not to soften or spoil their voices when communicating within this norm. Especially when mandated to participate in a campaign, the emphasis lies in delivering clear information, spanning from the party's vision and mission to the political agenda that will be pursued on behalf of the constituents (A17, PKS cadre, interviewed 2022).

The interview above highlights the commitment of PKS, as an Islamic party, to empower women in politics. The party has established internal guidelines rooted in PKS ideology, with a particular focus on female politicians. These guidelines facilitate women's active participation in forums within PKS. Thus, the involvement of women in PKS as politicians not only meets the 30% quota

within the party but also serves as an inspiration for women to engage in political participation. In other words, PKS's female cadres and politicians firmly believe and emphasize that internal, subjective political activities are a form of worship. In this regard, the worship in question aims to benefit the people. Therefore, entering politics must be driven by sincere intentions and executed with excellence. In line with the interviews above, *liqo* serves as a political communication strategy employed by PKS to integrate party ideology with the voters. Thus, various forums and strategies have been implemented through PKS as an Islamic party. Even though the circumstances align with the idealistic dimension of PKS, female PKS politicians vying in general elections must have the party's backing.

The PKS Ideology as Political Education for Women Politicians

Based on the interviews below, it is evident that the political communication strategy employed by PKS involves organizing spiritual formation forums, including *liqo*. The forum is rooted in the PKS ideology as an Islamic party. Indeed, Islamic values are inherent within the party. The subsequent question is how the PKS ideology is employed as a means of political education for women politicians and integrated into their political communication strategy. Here are three quotes that may shed light on this research question:

Da'wah is one of the activities that provides us with an understanding of the PKS ideology. As politicians, we can interpret this ideology to potential voters (W2, women politician, 2023). Initially I thought that PKS was an exclusive party because it supported the tarbiyah movement. However, as an Islamic party, PKS is open to sympathizers and provides us with the opportunity to understand the party's ideology (A1, sympathizer, 2023). In my opinion, PKS female politicians also show competence that aligns with Islamic values. They possess strong idealism, especially when conducting campaigns that do not only focus on votes but also focus on problems in society (A2, sympathizer, 2023).

The findings reveal that sympathizers endorse the involvement of PKS female politicians in the political arena. Furthermore, during their campaigns, these politicians not only introduce themselves but also elucidate the ideological principles of their party. Hence, potential voters become more acquainted with the party they intend to vote for.

The growth and development of the da'wah movement within the party must progress through stages and in proportion, aligning with the prevailing sunnatullah. Therefore, a sense of gradualness and balance (tadarruj and tawazun) should be integral to all party activities, either in the work of individual

functionaries and their supporters or in their collective work (A1, PKS sympathizer, interviewed 2021). In my opinion, the member of the PKS, being as an Islamic party, are aware of the necessity for a comprehensive understanding of Islam. They view Islam as a holistic guide that encompasses all dimensions of human life, without segregating religion from the state. In essence, PKS members see Islam as a constitutional rule that not only addresses spiritual needs but also governs other aspects of life. The members of PKS believe that this universal conceptual framework serves as a spiritual and moral foundation for Indonesia's development (A3, PKS sympathizer, interviewed 2021).

The interview results mentioned above show that PKS, as an Islamic party, remains true to its ideology by not delineating a separation between religion and state. Furthermore, the policies it has embraced are directed toward improving individuals, society, government, and the state. The reformist characteristics of the PKS substantiate this policy, as the party consistently avoids any qualities or traits that may be detrimental. Through *da'wah* media, PKS presents a novel perspective of Islam, emphasizing that *da'wah* is a duty for all Muslims. Moreover, Interviews below describe the role of female politicians in translating the PKS ideology into interpret it into good values that can be accepted by society.

Becoming a female politician is not an easy thing, as it involves grappling with various challenges when analyzing societal issues. However, the values embedded in the PKS ideology, such as iltizam adab, have helped me in introducing PKS to society. (W2, female politician, 2023). In my opinion, female politicians are not always required to maintain a soft tone of voice. What matters most is that the information they convey is clear, aligns with the vision and mission of their political parties, and addresses the needs of the community. This was exemplified by female PKS politicians during their campaign efforts (A8, PKS sympathizer, interviewed 2021). A female politician's effectiveness is not solely judged by her appearance but also by her ability to articulate a vision and mission in an easily understandable manner. Female politicians should also be well-acquainted with the conditions of the people within their constituencies. This enables them to relay information regarding issues faced by the residents, drawing from comprehensive and reliable information sources (A10, PKS sympathizer, interviewed 2021).

The finding shows how female politicians are actively engaged in promoting the good values in PKS. This becomes evident as they communicate the vision and mission of their political party. Furthermore, as an Islamic party, PKS places a high emphasis on decorum when engaging with the public. Being a female politician is not solely determined by the gentleness of her voice but also by her resolute approach to scrutinizing societal issues.

Despite ongoing efforts to refine the strategy for planting the PKS ideology, there may be instances where female politicians have not fully grasped or interpreted this

ideology. This is due to the presence of female politicians who lack a complete understanding of the PKS ideology. Thus, female politicians may encounter challenges in providing information and encouraging both sympathizers and the public to scrutinize the government policies, (A17, PKS cadre, interviewed 2021). In my point of view, conveying the party's ideology to the public, especially potential voters, is of utmost significance. It demonstrates that PKS, as an Islamic party, promotes the cultivation of intentions rooted in religious values among its cadres. Hence, when elected in the general election, they carry the responsibility of upholding this ideology (W1, female politician, interviewed 2023).

Drawing from the data presented above, it is evident that PKS representatives, as an Islamic party, recognize and hold a distinct and unique position in Islam, distinct from that of men. However, PKS allows women to actively engage within the party and join politics, seeking to strike a balance between religious principles and state principles. The party also extends opportunities for women to participate in politics and pursue careers as politicians (Park, 2021). Therefore, PKS organizes its central, provincial, and district-level management with due consideration for adhering to the regulation of ensuring a 30% representation of women.

Discussion

This research underscores the role of party ideology as a political communication strategy for female politicians. It aligns with the findings of López-García & Pavía (2018), emphasizing the significance of political communication for political parties aiming to garner mass support. However, in contrast to the research findings, it was discovered that political communication can also be formed through forums facilitated by political parties while instilling political ideology, a practice exemplified by PKS. Typically, Islamic parties are often perceived as adherents of patriarchal culture. However, this research delves into the challenges women face in their political involvement, particularly those who aspire to become legislative candidates.

PKS, as an Islamic party, pursues political education through a political communication strategy, namely *liqo*. This research aligns with the concept put forth by Freeden (2006), asserting that the ideology upheld by PKS serves as a strategy capable of promoting justice and fostering women's political participation. As a result, the forums established by PKS offer female politicians opportunities to acquire political education and enhance their competency. Despite being perceived as an exclusive party due to its *tarbiyah* movement, the results of this research address the concerns expressed by Folke et al. (2020) regarding political dynasties and their impact on women's participation.

PKS shows that to participate in the general election, both men and women must undergo similar processes, adhering to the procedures laid out by the party. This procedure starts with the cadre formation process, and it encompasses all participation in all available forums within PKS as a part of their political education. Therefore, only those who demonstrate competence are eligible to participate in the general election, with the objective being more than merely meeting the 30% quota. On the other hand, this research provides an updated view of Suntana & Tresnawaty (2020) where highly educated Muslims may not always be engaged in political discourse to address political issues. However, this research shows how PKS is striving to advance political education. Moreover, the participants in this research typically possessed a higher educational background, and the PKS ideology has enabled them to develop the capacity for informed political discourse. This is particularly true for female politicians who utilize their competence to analyze and provide solutions to societal issues for the greater good. PKS female politicians also adhere to guidelines that require them to uphold communication etiquette and are not obliged to adopt a soft tone of voice. Also, the findings of this study corroborate the research by Szlovak (2017), highlighting PKS as an Islamic party that effectively executes its political strategy. This is exemplified by the ideology embraced by female politicians, which mirrors religious values capable of influencing voters' perceptions and behaviors. Furthermore, the appearance of PKS female politicians shows their adherence to the moral principles upheld within the party. This underscores that PKS's strategy, utilizing interpreting the party's ideology, effectively bolsters the professional competencies of female politicians.

PKS members' strategy, as an Islamic party, aligns with the principles described by Applebaum & Anatol (1974), where the purpose of communication activities is instrumental in shaping relationships. This alignment has been established and nurtured throughout the regeneration process for both women and men within the party. PKS members can maintain the Islamic party through *da'wah* activities and personal branding. Additionally, voters of female politicians concur that their attitudes align with those of the party.

The findings of this research suggest that it is not yet time for female politicians to face the challenges posed by gender stereotypes, as anticipated by van der Pas (2021). This is because support from political parties plays a crucial role in mitigating prevailing gender stereotypes. This situation is further supported by PKS guidelines, which are committed to affording women opportunities that extend beyond mere quota fulfillment. Therefore, in line with the concept of

ideology (Alfian, 1992), PKS's realism shows that its ideology contains fundamental values inherent in society.

These fundamental values foster intellectual prowess, moral integrity, and personal competencies through *da'wah* activities. While in principle PKS is an Islamic party that upholds religious values, these values are actualized through the conduct of its politicians. Being an Islamic party, PKS extends opportunities for female politicians to engage in developing *da'wah* and directs them toward contributing to the realization of a prosperous society. Female politicians are encouraged to emphasize their campaigns by providing the community with transparent information regarding their vision and mission.

Conclusion and Suggestions

This research concludes that Islamic parties can implement political communication strategies by embracing and promoting their political ideology. This political ideology has been transformed into guidelines and spiritual development platforms, serving as a form of political education for political party cadres. Thus, these cadres can adeptly convey and interpret ideological values to sympathizers and potential voters. Furthermore, the PKS political ideology creates opportunities for women to actively engage in politics as politicians. This study can serve as an illustration for parties that may still have reservations about supporting women in politics. The strategy employed by PKS does not eliminate its party ideology; instead, it fortifies this ideology among cadres and sympathizers through effective *da'wah* and cadre formation. PKS endeavors, grounded in Islamic faith, principles, and morality, aim to establish a just, prosperous, and dignified civil society. This commitment to justice is further exemplified by the absence of discrimination against PKS female politicians, be it male or female voters who endorse them. PKS regards ideology as a system of beliefs or values that its followers earnestly pursue and manifest across all aspects of life. The three dimensions of ideology serve as a conceptual framework for comprehending the trajectory of struggle and the foundation for the nation's movement. Meanwhile, the dimension of belief raises commitment, militancy, and positive fanaticism, which triggers the passion and blood of the struggle and inflates the spirit of self-sacrifice. This research has limitations, notably in terms of its geographical scope and the relatively small sample size. Thus, regional differences may potentially affect the research outcomes. Future studies are encouraged to expand on this research by conducting quantitative research methods to gather additional data, which could elucidate the

relationship between the political communication of female PKS politicians and their impact on female voters.

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