

## Post-Grunigian Political Communication of Female DPD Members Without Political Family Background

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### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji praktik Humas (PR) politik pasca-Grunigian dalam konteks komunikasi politik anggota perempuan Dewan Perwakilan Daerah (DPD) Republik Indonesia yang terpilih untuk periode 2024-2029 yang bukan berasal dari keluarga petahana atau politik. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini mempelajari strategi yang diterapkan oleh anggota perempuan DPD RI untuk memperkuat hubungan dengan publik. Sumber data adalah berita dan publikasi daring di media massa yang menampilkan 13 perempuan non-petahana tanpa keluarga politik yang memenuhi kriteria inklusi. Faktor-faktor yang diidentifikasi sebagai kunci kemenangan anggota DPD meliputi popularitas dan aksesibilitas, program dan kegiatan sosial, kampanye dan media sosial yang efektif, pemberdayaan dan representasi gender, ketidakpuasan terhadap petahana, kredibilitas dan prestasi, serta dukungan dari kelompok tertentu. Temuan penelitian ini melampaui ekspektasi teoritis pemikiran Grunigian, sehingga dapat dilihat sebagai ciri khas pasca-Grunigian yang lebih kompleks dan etis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang dinamika komunikasi politik perempuan di Indonesia dan menawarkan wawasan berharga bagi praktisi PR politik dan pembuat kebijakan dalam memperkuat representasi perempuan di ranah politik.

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### ABSTRACT

*This research aims to examine post-Grunigian political Public Relations (PR) practices in the context of political communication of female members of the Republic of Indonesia's Regional Representative Council (DPD) elected for the 2024-2029 period who do not come from incumbent or political families. Through a qualitative approach, this research will study the strategies implemented by female DPD RI members to strengthen relationships with the public. The data sources are news and online publications in the mass media that feature 13 non-incumbent women without political families who meet the inclusion criteria. Factors identified to be key to the victory of DPD members include popularity and accessibility, social programs and activities, effective campaigns and social media, gender empowerment and representation, dissatisfaction with incumbents, credibility and achievements, and support from*

*specific groups. The findings of this study exceed the theoretical expectations of Grunigian thought, so it can be seen as characteristic of a more complex and ethical post-Grunigian. This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of women's political communication in Indonesia and offer valuable insights for political PR practitioners and policymakers in strengthening women's representation in the political sphere.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The representation of women in the Indonesian parliament is below the 30% quota. However, the Regional Representative Council (DPD) has achieved this threshold, with a representation of 31% in 2019, which is higher than the House of Representatives (DPR), which only reached 20.5% in the same year (Nirmala et al., 2023). The 2024 election saw a significant increase in the representation of women in the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI), with a record high of 34%, which translates to one-third of the total number of DPD members.

The representation of women in parliament is crucial for ensuring more balanced policies in treating citizens, particularly those whose gender background is female (Aspinall et al., 2021). Furthermore, the representation of women in parliament ensures that emerging issues can be more varied and it offers solutions to existing policy problems (Russell, 2021). Female council members are also known to be more responsive to public input compared to male council members (Blumenau, 2021).

To become council members, female candidates need to use suitable campaign strategies. When the target organization is the Regional Representative Council of Indonesia (DPD RI), which is by definition made up of independent candidates running without party affiliation, this tactic becomes even more crucial. Nevertheless, thus far, only one study has looked into DPD RI members' communication tactics (Nirmala et al., 2023). Moreover, candidates outside the political families who are not incumbents have not received special attention. Incumbency or being part of political families might create bias because of the flow of resources to support political campaigns, either from the performance during the current term or from family members and party relations. This research focuses on

female members of the DPD RI who are not part of political families and are also not incumbents. The purpose of this study is to examine the practice of political Public Relations (PR) in the context of political communication campaigns of newly elected female members of the DPD RI 2024-2029.

The present study employs both Grunigian and post-Grunigian hypotheses. These four public relations models identified by Grunig and Hunt (1984) in their public relations theory are the press agency model, the two-way symmetrical model, the public information model, and the two-way asymmetrical model. Since the public information model seeks to present truthful and accurate information, governmental bodies, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations frequently use it.

The two-way asymmetrical model considers public opinion but frequently manipulates feedback to benefit the organization rather than genuinely considering the public's interest. An example of utilizing this strategy is a marketing campaign that employs surveys and focus groups to refine its messaging. Through research, the asymmetrical model persuades and influences the audience by understanding their attitudes and behaviors. This model is called asymmetric because it uses public feedback only to help improve the organization's comprehension of persuasion and audience influence.

The press agency or public relations model aims to create awareness and garner attention, sometimes through sensationalism or exaggerated claims. This is the oldest public relations model, focusing primarily on efforts to gain media publicity and attention to promote products, services, or individuals. This model is often criticized for not only lacking ethical consideration and transparency but also for

prioritizing attention rather than accuracy (Grunig and Kim, 2021).

The two-way symmetrical model uses balanced two-way communication where the organization and the public are equally involved in the communication process. This model is considered the most ethical and effective because it focuses on reciprocal understanding and two-way communication between the organization and the public. However, this model is often viewed as too idealistic and challenging to implement due to resource constraints and organizational resistance to sharing power and decision-making with the public (Grunig and Kim, 2021).

Over time, Grunig's models have come under heavy criticism, which has given rise to post-Grunigian public relations. One of the sharpest criticisms comes from McKie and Munshi (2007), who argued that Grunig's models focus only on taking organizational effectiveness and efficiency into account. According to McKie and Munshi (2007), a better approach is more critical, in other words, it also considers ecological sustainability, social equity, and ethical practices. Another criticism pointed out by Motion and Leitch (1996), targeted the ethnocentric bias of Grunig's model. They argued that the Grunig model is rooted in the Western perspective and fails to consider cultural diversity and communication practices on a global scale. Therefore, its effectiveness in handling public relations issues in other countries is doubtful. L'Etang (2008) emphasized that the Grunig model is too idealistic and overlooks power imbalances in

public relations practices. In reality, effective communication requires negotiation between stakeholders and the public relations profession. Generally, post-Grunig criticism emphasizes the limitations of the Grunig model in addressing issues of complexity, power dynamics, cultural differences, and ethical concerns in contemporary practice.

## 2. METHOD

We chose Google News as the news aggregator for online media in the Indonesian language. Meanwhile, for members of the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI), researchers used the data from the 2024 Election winners to obtain the list of DPD RI members for 2024-2029. The inclusion criteria for selecting candidates are non-incumbent women and are not members of a political family. Candidates are considered non-incumbent if they are not listed as winners of the 2019-2024 Election. If they are winners of the 2019-2024 Election in any capacity (DPD, DPR, DPRD), they are excluded as research samples. The criteria for not being a political family member mean they do not have family members who have ever served or are currently serving as heads or deputy heads of regions or members of the council (Aspinall & As'ad, 2016). The candidates who have one family member, besides themselves, serving as a political official are categorized as political family members and are included in the exclusion criteria. The results of the filtering using the inclusion and exclusion criteria are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The Female Members of the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI) for 2024-2029

No	Name	Province	Incumbent	Family
1	Darwati Abdul Gani	Aceh	Yes	Yes
2	Badikenita Br. Sitepu	North Sumatra	Yes	No
3	Cerint Iralozza Tasya	West Sumatra	No	No
4	Emma Yohanna	West Sumatra	Yes	No
5	Sewitri	Riau	Yes	Yes
6	Elviana	Jambi	Yes	No
7	Ivanda Awalina Firdausi Sukandar	Jambi	No	Yes
8	Ratu Tenny Leriva	South Sumatra	No	Yes
9	Jialyka Maharani	South Sumatra	Yes	Yes
10	Amaliah	South Sumatra	Yes	Yes
11	Eva Susanti	South Sumatra	Yes	Yes

No	Name	Province	Incumbent	Family
12	Elisa Ernasari	Bengkulu	No	No
13	Destita Khairilisani	Bengkulu	No	No
14	Leni Haryati John Latief	Bengkulu	Yes	Yes
15	Jihan Nurlela	Lampung	Yes	Yes
16	Dinda Rembulan	Bangka Belitung Island	No	Yes
17	Dwi Ajeng Sekar Respaty	Riau Island	No	Yes
18	Fahira Idris	DK Jakarta	Yes	No
19	Happy Djarot	DK Jakarta	No	Yes
20	Aanya Rina Casmayanti	West Java	No	No
21	Jihan Fahira	West Java	No	Yes
22	Agita Nurfianti	West Java	No	No
23	Casytha A. Kathmandu	Central Java	Yes	Yes
24	Denty Eka Widi Pratiwi	Central Java	Yes	No
25	Gusti Kanjeng Ratu Hemas	Yogyakarta	Yes	Yes
26	R.A Yashinta Sekarwangi Mega	Yogyakarta	No	Yes
27	Lia Istifhama	East Java	No	Yes
28	Kondang Kusumaning Ayu	East Java	No	No
29	Andiara Aprilia Hikmat	Banten	Yes	No
30	Ade Yuliasih	Banten	Yes	No
31	Ni Luh Putu Ary Pertamina	Bali	No	No
32	Evi Apita Maya	West Nusa Tenggara	Yes	No
33	Maria Stevi Harman	East Nusa Tenggara	No	Yes
34	Hilda Manafe	East Nusa Tenggara	Yes	No
35	Erlinawati	West Kalimantan	Yes	No
36	Maria Goreti	West Kalimantan	Yes	No
37	Ernie Daryanti	Central Kalimantan	No	Yes
38	Siti Aseanti	Central Kalimantan	No	No
39	Sinta Rosma Yenti	East Kalimantan	No	Yes
40	Aji Mirni Mawarni	East Kalimantan	Yes	No
41	Larasati Moriska	North Kalimantan	No	No
42	Maya Rumantir	South Sulawesi	Yes	No
43	Cherish Harriette	South Sulawesi	Yes	No
44	Andriana Charlotte Dondokambey	North Sulawesi	Yes	No
45	Leni Andriani Surunuddin	Southeast Sulawesi	No	Yes
46	Wa Ode Rabia Al Adawiyah Ridwan	Southeast Sulawesi	Yes	Yes
47	Febriyanti Hongkiriwang	Central Sulawesi	No	Yes
48	Rahmijati Jahja	Gorontalo	Yes	Yes
49	Novita Anakotta	Maluku	Yes	No
50	Anna Latuconsina	Maluku	Yes	Yes
51	Mirati Dewaningsih	Maluku	Yes	No
52	Regina Muabuay	Papua	No	No
53	Lalita	Papua	No	No

No	Name	Province	Incumbent	Family
54	Lis Tabuni	Central Papua	No	No
55	Eka kristina Yeimo	Central Papua	No	No

Source: KPU (2024)

Table 1 shows the number of 55 female members of the DPD RI 2024-2029. This number represents 36.18% of the total 152 elected members of the DPD RI in the 2024 Election. It covers 30 provinces in Indonesia, leaving eight provinces represented entirely by men. Only one province has all female members of the DPD RI, which is South Sumatra. This condition is consistent with the 2019-2024 period, where South Sumatra was the only province with all female members of the DPD RI elected. Three out of four elected members of the DPD RI in South Sumatra are incumbents.

Furthermore, out of the 55 female members of the DPD RI for the 2024-2029 term, only 13 are non-incumbents and non-members of political families, accounting for 23.64%. The remaining 29, or 52.73%, are incumbents, meaning they have previously held positions as members of the DPR/DPRD or DPD. Meanwhile, 24, or 43.64%, are members of political families. Their relationships with the political families are varied, including being the child of a vice governor (1 person), the sibling of

a vice governor (1 person), the child of a member of the DPR RI (2 people), the child of a regent or former regent (5 people), the child of a governor (1 person), the member of a sultanate family (1 person), the mother of a member of DPD RI (1 person), the wife of a member of DPD RI (1 person), the wife of a member of DPR RI (2 people), the wife of a regent or former regent (3 people), the wife of a governor (1 person), the wife of the head of the DPRD (1 person), the wife of a vice governor (1 person), the niece of a governor (1 person), the niece of a vice governor (1 person), a queen consort (1 person), and the child of a chairman or former chairman of the DPRD (1 person). The position of an incumbent or member of a political family provides significant support in terms of resources for candidates (Kabullah & Fajri, 2021). By excluding candidates with these characteristics, the factor of political resources can be controlled, allowing researchers to focus on communication factors. The 13 members of the DPD RI 2024-2029 who were elected as samples are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Female Members of DPD RI 2024-2029 Non-Incumbents Non-Political Family

No	Name	Province
1	Cerint Iralozza Tasya	West Sumatera
2	Elisa Ernasari	Bengkulu
3	Destita Khairilisani	Bengkulu
4	Aanya Rina Casmayanti	West Java
5	Agita Nurfianti	West Java
6	Kondang Kusumaning Ayu	East Java
7	Ni Luh Putu Ary Pertami	Bali
8	Siti Aseanti	Central Kalimantan
9	Larasati Moriska	North Kalimantan
10	Regina Muabuay	Papua
11	Lalita	Papua
12	Lis Tabuni	Central Papua
13	Eka Kristina Yeimo	Central Papua

Source: KPU, 2024

Next, the researchers used Google News to search for campaign news about the 13 DPD RI members who are the subjects of this study. The keywords used were their full names. The top ten news articles that mentioned their names were collected and used for analysis to identify the factors that determined the candidates' winnings in the DPD RI elections.

candidate is attributed with only one main factor or theme to focus the analysis. However, each candidate also employed a variety of different communication strategies in addition to the main strategy. The most commonly used theme is social programs and activities, which was the primary strategy for the three candidates. Below is an explanation of each political communication strategy.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 shows the themes that emerged from the online news search for each candidate. Each

Table 3. Campaign Themes of DPD RI Members 2024-2029

No	Name	Main Theme
1	Cerint Iralozza Tasya	Popularity and Accessibility
2	Elisa Ernasari	Credibility and Achievements
3	Destita Khairilisani	Social Media Campaign
4	Aanya Rina Casmayanti	Social Programs and Activities
5	Agita Nurfianti	Empowerment and Gender Representation
6	Kondang Kusumaning Ayu	Dissatisfaction with Incumbents
7	Ni Luh Putu Ary Pertami	Social Programs and Activities
8	Siti Aseanti	Support from Specific Groups
9	Larasati Moriska	Popularity and Accessibility
10	Regina Muabuay	Credibility and Achievements
11	Lalita	Social Media Campaign
12	Lis Tabuni	Empowerment and Gender Representation
13	Eka Kristina Yeimo	Social Programs and Activities

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The strategy of popularity and accessibility utilizes the candidate's recognition and approachability by constituents. Cerint Iralozza Tasya is a young doctor who has received widespread support from the community and medical professionals. She is also known for her simplicity and involvement in various social activities, making her popular. Another candidate using the popularity strategy is Larasati Moriska, who is widely known in her community and has good access to various societal groups.

The strategy of social programs and activities prioritizes the candidate's involvement in social programs and activities within the community. Aanya Rina Casmayanti uses this strategy, being active in women's empowerment programs and social activities that directly address the community's needs, making her a

preferred choice among those involved in similar activities. Another candidate using this strategy is Ni Luh Putu Ary Pertami, the one who is active in various social and community activities. Eka Kristina Yeimo also prioritizes the strategy of social programs and activities.

The social media campaign is a strategy that relies on social media as a mass communication tool. This strategy is applied by Destita Khairilisani, who uses social media intensively for her campaign to connect with young voters and urban communities with relevant and engaging campaign messages. Another candidate using this strategy is Lalita.

The strategy of empowerment and gender representation focuses on campaigns to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. This strategy is used by Agita Nurfianti, who focuses on these issues, thereby she gains strong

support from women's groups and women's rights organizations. This strategy is also used by Lis Tabuni, who is known for actively advocating for women's issues and gender inclusivity.

Discontent with incumbents can be considered a passive strategy that leverages public sentiment. This strategy is used by Kondang Kusumaning Ayu, who offers a new alternative viewed as more competent and trustworthy compared to the incumbent who is perceived as underperforming and unsatisfactory to voters.

Strategies for credibility and achievement prioritize the candidate's achievement. This strategy is used by Elisa Ernasari, who is known for her achievements in various social and health projects, earning her community's respect and trust. Regina Muabuy also uses this strategy by showing a strong track record in education and community development.

Lastly, there's support from specific groups, a strategy employed by Siti Aseanti. Siti garners support from local groups and religious organizations that endorse her vision and mission.

The findings that the public relations success of female DPD RI members who are non-incumbents and non-political family members is due to popularity and accessibility, social programs and activities, effective campaigning and social media, empowerment, and gender representation, dissatisfaction with incumbents, credibility and achievements, and support from specific groups, are consistent with several previous studies. For instance, the factors of empowerment and gender representation, as well as support from Muslim women's organizations, were known to be key to the success of female candidates in the 2019 general elections (Mahsun et al., 2021). A study conducted in Bihar, India, shows that dissatisfaction with incumbents is an important factor in the victory of candidates in state council elections (Biswas, 2023). Fahey (2023) deeply viewed the significance of social media in the successful achievement of candidates in the 2021 elections in Japan. Essentially, previous research supports the findings of this study, and these factors are commonly found in other regions that hold elections.

Furthermore, these findings are still relevant when viewed from a Grunigian standpoint. In particular, these factors are consistent with two models: the two-way symmetric and the two-way asymmetric (Grunig & Kim, 2021). Factors relevant to the two-way symmetric model include popularity and accessibility, social programs and activities, empowerment and gender representation, dissatisfaction with incumbents, and support from specific groups. Studies indicate that the two-way symmetric strategy plays an important role in building trust, confidence, and public knowledge (Li & Lee, 2024) which impacts the improvement of performance (Vlahović et al., 2020). Factors such as popularity and accessibility indicate that successful candidates for the DPD have utilized two-way communication that benefits both parties to build strong relationships with voters. Additionally, candidates involved in social activities often strive to understand and respond to community needs. This reflects a two-way symmetric communication approach, where the interests of both parties are accommodated. Meanwhile, candidates focusing on gender empowerment use two-way communication to advocate for women's rights and representation to create a dialogue that supports positive change in society. Similarly, new candidates often listen to public complaints about incumbents and use that feedback to form more relevant and responsive campaigns. Lastly, active involvement with advocacy groups and communities demonstrates a symmetrical approach, where candidates collaborate with these groups to achieve common goals.

Meanwhile, factors that belong to the two-way asymmetric model include effective campaigning and social media, as well as credibility and achievements. The use of social media allows candidates to engage in two-way communication and the goal of influencing the public to align with their agendas (Wut et al., 2022). This is evident in effective digital campaigns where candidates collect feedback to refine their messages. Similarly, candidates with strong track records can use information about their achievements to influence public opinion effectively.

However, the factors identified previously can be better explained using a post-Grunigian

perspective. One of the main criticisms of Grunigian thought is that two-way symmetric communication is not truly a dialogue (Kent & Lane, 2021). The emergence of social media reflects a broader capacity for dialogue, and candidates consider this dialogue important (Wang et al., 2021). The use of social media as a primary campaign platform enables more direct and responsive interaction with voters, addressing the limitations of traditional Grunigian models. Candidates can use platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to communicate with voters in real-time situations and on a more personal level.

Furthermore, a fragmented public requires a more tailored communication approach. Candidates need to comprehend the different segments of the public and customize their messages for various groups. This is better accommodated in post-Grunigian thinking, which is more flexible and adaptive, emphasizing pluralism, decentralization, and public skepticism. (Holtzhausen, 2000). The Grunig model is viewed as too monolithic in its perspective of modern society, which is diverse and fragmented with various interests and values (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). For example, participants can focus their attention on specific stakeholder groups who may be afraid to speak out because they feel powerless and unable to communicate their opinions (Lane, 2023). Candidates can get significant support from these groups and other sympathetic groups through empowerment programs. In this context, candidates exploit identities, differences, and power to communicate persuasively to gain support from a diverse and socio-culturally complex society (DiRusso & Stansberry, 2022).

Similarly, the post-Grunigian approach emphasizes active public participation and transparency in communication. This is relevant to the campaign strategies that are inclusive and transparent applied by female candidates for the DPD RI to build trust and credibility among voters. The Grunig model does not consider the participatory nature of social media, where the public is not just a passive receiver, but also an active participant in the communication process (Roth-Cohen & Avidar, 2022). A greater focus by candidates on public stakeholders through social media and the social impact that social

media can provide is a characteristic of post-Grunigian thought (Macnamara & Gregory, 2018).

Furthermore, there is an increased focus on ethical and socially responsible PR practices in post-Grunigian approaches (Kent & Li, 2020). Candidates who advocate for gender empowerment and fair representation reflect these values, which are increasingly valued by modern voters. The Grunig model is overly focused on organizational effectiveness and efficiency, which has shifted in recent times to aspects like ecological sustainability, social equality, and ethical practices (McKie & Munshi, 2007). Munshi and Kurian (2021) stressed that contemporary public relations needs to situate itself within a context of values and ethics that support society as a whole.

The essential point is that while Grunigian models offer a basic framework for understanding the relationship between candidates and the public as either symmetric or asymmetric two-way communication, the post-Grunigian approach is more relevant for explaining the success of female DPD RI candidates who are non-incumbents and not members of political families. This is because it reflects the dynamics of modern media, the complexity of the public, and the importance of ethics and sustainability in public relations.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study examines the political communication strategies of female members of the Regional Representative Council (DPD) RI elected for the 2024-2029 period who are not from a background of incumbency or family politics. The study's findings show that the main factors contributing to their victory include popularity and accessibility, social programs and activities, social media campaigns, gender empowerment and representation, dissatisfaction with incumbents, credibility and achievements, and support from specific groups.

The strengths of this study lie in its comprehensive identification of various communication strategies relevant to the current Indonesian political context, exceeding theoretical expectations from Grunigian thought and exhibiting post-Grunigian characteristics that are more complex and ethical. However, this

study also has limitations, including its reliance on online news analysis, which may not fully reflect the overall communication strategies used by candidates. Future research is expected to include in-depth interviews with candidates and voters to gain a more holistic understanding of political communication dynamics and the effectiveness of the strategies employed.

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