Women, Do We Support One Another? Voting Behavior of Indonesian Female College Students for a Female Candidate amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

Tri Windari

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By Tri Windari¹ and Budi Suryadi²

Abstract
This study seeks to analyze and describe the voting behavior of female college students for a female candidate in Indonesia at Banjarmasin Mayoral Election in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, political campaigns were mainly switched to communication and information technology with a lack of mass gatherings and direct political campaigns due to Covid-19 health protocols. In a predominantly Muslim and highly patriarchal society, this is also the second time this province to have a female candidate for this position and the first time for this city. Amidst the negative stereotypes of a female candidate and the attacks from the opponents, this female candidate managed to gain second place. Disputes emerged, and the court decided to hold re-election in three sub-districts. The disputes and the campaign dynamics show how this society at large perceives a female candidate. This study elaborates on the possible affecting factors in voting behavior, i.e., religious interpretation, ethnicity, gender, the role of media, perceptions of voters related to candidate's age and programs, political party affiliation, the role of family, and peers. This research method combines quantitative and qualitative methods with the focus on the qualitative method which is based on interviews and literature analysis. This study collected the data based on online surveys and interviews of Lambung Mangkurat University students, Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia, where the election was held. The selection for college student respondents aims to focus on young, educated voters and control the variables of education, age, and socioeconomic factors of voters or the effects of social class, which are also often, considered affecting variables in voting behavior. Therefore, the factors of education, age, and socioeconomic variables are not the focus of analysis. Hence, this study may be transferable to analyze the voting behavior of young, educated, and no-income group which makes up a significant percentage of Indonesian voters.

Keywords: Election, Gender, Media, Religion, Patriarchal religious society, Qualitative method

Introduction
Indonesia is in Southeast Asia and has a population of about 273 million, of which half of them are women. However, women are still underrepresented at all levels of government and political positions, even though there is no explicit legal limitation for women to hold those positions. The most difficult obstacles for women's political and professional participation are caused by the country's heavily patriarchal society, which prevents women from getting equal access (Parawansa, 2002). Under the New Order regime before 1999 with the single majority party (Golkar Party), most women sitting at the notable positions had a familial connection or a close connection with influential people at the central government. After the reformation in 1999 which marks the beginning of Indonesian democracy, Indonesians can enjoy direct free elections for the president and members of

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parliament. Nevertheless, Indonesians could directly vote for the local government leaders several years later under Law No.32/2004 Regional Government on the introduction of direct, popular election for the heads of districts, mayors, and governors, which was previously elected by the local parliaments. But this law still required the candidacy nominated by political parties for those positions. However, Law No.12/2008 Regional Government finally allows independent candidates (Buehler, 2010).

The gender quota system has also been implemented to boost women’s participation in politics. Nevertheless, with all changes in the electoral system and more freedom of expression, the number of women in Indonesian politics is still very small compared to men (Siregar, 2005; Parawansa, 2002; Prihatini, 2018).

Indonesia is highly patriarchal and a Muslim-majority country. Literature had mentioned how some interpretations of Islam and patriarchal culture put obstacles to women’s political participation (Kazemi, 2000; Prihatini, 2018; Rizzo et al., 2002; Soedarwo et al., 2020). Modernization and the advancement of technology increase the use of media for campaigns with various effects on voters. The pandemic Covid-19 since 2020 has even pronounced the media usage as health protocols require social distancing. Hence, political campaigns were shifted to rely heavily on electronic media sources, i.e., the internet and television. As the fourth-biggest population in the world, Indonesians are also big users of social media. Political campaigns under this platform can instantly lead to various effects on voters, with hoaxes being more prevalent and difficult to clarify.

There has been affirmative action at the parliamentary electoral process to increase women politicians, both at the local and national levels, such as the gender quota and zipper system in the political party nomination list (Bessel, 2010). However, there has been a lack of or absence of legal support and protection for women to participate in the local government head elections (Satriyo, 2010). Besides the cultural barriers to women's political participation, structural obstacles remain for local government elections. Under the direct and free election, men and women have equal freedom to decide their votes. With the number of women in Indonesia, why are women still far underrepresented in political seats? What factors affecting Indonesian voters at the election, particularly women voters? Does Indonesian voting behavior show a similar pattern with many other countries? If yes, in what aspects? Do Indonesian women tend to support women candidates? To answer these questions, we take the case of Banjarmasin Mayoral Election 2020 with a female candidate and focus on female college students to analyze "Do women voters tend to vote for a female candidate? What are the important factors determining these students in voting?"

Therefore, this study aims to explain these questions by focusing on young female politically educated voters. By selecting college students, this study controls for several socioeconomic factors, i.e., age, education, and income/social class. To focus on the aspect of homosocial capital (Aspinall et al., 2021), it focuses on female college students' voting behavior towards a female mayoral candidate in Banjarmasin city, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. This small-scale study aims to contribute a specific piece of analysis on young educated female voters' attitude towards a female candidate which will benefit in studying Indonesian voting behavior in general. This research can also be replicated on a bigger scale.

Theoretical Background

An election is essential to define a democratic system; as Schumpeter (1975) stated, "Democracy is a political method, ... a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political—legislative and administrative—decisions...." (Schumpeter, 1975, 242). Therefore, it is principal to held elections and is useful to understand how citizens make the decisions in voting. Research has been done to analyze reasons for voting and understand the patterns of
voting behavior. National identity attachment and how people perceive their nationalism may also affect their voting decisions (Windari, 2021). Socioeconomic factors related to the demographic profile are often influential, but the findings are still mixed across countries. The variables of demographic profile frequently studied are age, education, income/social class, urban vs. rural residence, gender, religion, and ethnicity. Media use, political party affiliation, the influence of family and friends/peers, and rational calculations are also possible affecting components.

There are two previous essential studies related to this research. The first research is conducted by Prihatini, Ella S (2018) on the voting behavior of young Indonesians toward female parliamentarian candidates. She found that the majority of young Indonesian voters prioritized male candidates based on their perception that men are better leaders than women, and this belief is influenced by Islamic interpretation. Young female voters also showed lower political knowledge than young male voters, while less informed society preferred male candidates over females. Another important study was conducted by Aspinall, E., White, S., and Savirani, A. (2021) on women's political representation in Indonesia, which analyzed how women candidates overcame structural and cultural barriers to win the seats. This research also illustrated the women's hardship in Indonesian highly patriarchal culture with a lack of structural supports for women. This research highlighted the role of homosocial capital where women candidates target women voters, especially in Muslim organizations, in delivering women's success. Thus, they show that Islamic affiliation may also provide leverage for women's political participation, not just putting obstacles.

The role of media has been increasingly crucial for political participation, especially during the election period and during the pandemic. Unfortunately, the current research on the effect of media on voters is mixed; it may increase or decrease voter turnout, or lead to more political polarization. Age may affect voting decisions differently, and when age is analyzed in relation to media exposure, the impact can be complex. As college students, the respondents of this study are categorized as young voters. Mujani, Liddle, and Ambardi (2018) may refer to them as critical democrats with the hopes of being critically evaluative of the socio-economic-political situations and politically rational in voting (Downs, 1957). However, young voters can also be cynical and distrust the government and political institutions (Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd, & Scullion, 2010). Those from a low socioeconomic background also tend to lack political cues to vote (Condon & Matthew, 2013). Age can also affect voting behavior concerning constituents' socio-political-economic conditions (Inglehart & Norris, 2000). Political knowledge that is related to political interest and internet use are determinants for electoral participation and this impact is even more profound among the young generation than the older generation (McAllister, 2016).

**Data and Method**

This study was conducted in a mixed-method using an online survey via Qualtrics for the quantitative method and follow-up interviews by phone to selected female respondents with semi-structured open questions for the qualitative method. The respondents were college students at Lambung Mangkurat University, Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. This university was selected because it is located in the district where the mayoral election was held. The respondents were the students at the school of social and political sciences for leveling their political knowledge and to have less variation of age. Indonesian college students also generally do not work, so their financial dependence on parents may not affect their voting behavior based on income/social class. Therefore, even though the factors of education, age, and socioeconomic/social class are important in determining voting behavior, they will not be the focus of analysis because the respondents have a similar level of
education, are within the same age group (18-27 years), and are not involved in the labor market due to their financial dependence on their parents.

Banjarmasin's mayoral election was held in December 2020, and the re-election over the dispute was held in April 2021. This research was conducted between April to June 2021. Banjarmasin is the capital city of South Kalimantan province and is highly patriarchal where the majority of the population has a conservative tone of Islamic interpretation regarding the division of men and women's role in society. This Islamic interpretation tends to put more obstacles for women holding political positions. Interestingly, in 2020 the city of Banjarmasin had a female candidate for the mayor position for the first time. This candidacy was the highest political candidacy for females in local elections in this province.

The online surveys were circulated online to students, and telephone interviews were conducted as a follow-up. The analysis focuses on motivations to vote based on selected components, i.e., religious interpretation, ethnicity, the role of media, voters' perception about the candidates' age and programs, political party affiliation, gender, and the role of family and friends. The analysis is based on self-reporting responses. It particularly concentrates on the voting behavior of female college students at a social and political sciences program under the notion that this group of voters is generally more politically knowledgeable and more politically interested compared to the general voters.

Findings and discussion

The responses of the online surveys were 40, but due to the incompleteness of responses, only 36 were valid for analysis. The follow-up interviews were conducted with five female respondents from the survey respondents selected randomly. The majority of total respondents were female accounting for 26 and only ten male respondents. The age range was between 18 to 27 years. The majority of respondents were from the same dominant group similar to all candidates, i.e., Banjaresse ethnic group, and were Muslims.

Gender

Of the total respondents, three did not vote in the election, and 17 voted for the female candidate. From these 17 votes for the female candidate, 16 were from the female respondents. It means most female respondents voted for the female candidate (61.5%), and 38.5% of female respondents voted for male candidates. It confirms the previous research that votes for female candidates are more likely from female voters (Aspinall et al., 2021; Prihatini, 2018), and Indonesian voters are likely to vote for male candidates (Strachan, 2014). The quota system in elections tends to increase the number of women in politics, particularly in Indonesia, with a highly patriarchal culture that puts serious structural obstacles (Bessel, 2010; Siregar, 2005; Soedarwo et al., 2020). However, there is no quota regulation for local government head elections, such as a mayoral election. Banjarmasin people tend to consider gendered norms traditional (Scarborough & Sin, 2020), where strict division labor roles are drawn between men and women, with women expected to stay at home. Different labor divisions related to socioeconomic factors may lead to different voting behavior between gender. It can be seen in women's experiences through these roles through time that can shift women's political ideology from leaning towards the right-wing to the left-wing (Emmenegger & Manow, 2014; Giger, 2009; Inglehart & Norris, 2000). Gender has also affected voting behavior indirectly because voters are likely to have more demanding evaluations towards female candidates that may be biased with stereotypes that may disadvantage female candidates (Ditonto et al., 2014).

Ireland is the ninth-best country in gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2021), but the number of women in politics is still low. However, voters did not consider gender
matters in casting their ballots (McElroy, 2018); it was more about political experiences and party affiliations (Quinlan & O’Malley, 2018). Nevertheless, in most countries, women are likely to have much less political experience and weaker political party influence, including in Ireland. Financial resources and political networks are determinants for women to win seats (Aspinall et al., 2021; Satriyo, 2010). The challenging barriers to entering politics often lead to women using dynastic connections (Aspinall et al., 2021) because adopting a popular political strategy does not guarantee success (Blackman & Jackson, 2019).

Table 1. The percentage of the total respondents who voted for the female candidate, indicated by yes/ya.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q8. Did you vote for candidate Ananda-Mushaffa?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes/Ya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No/Tidak</td>
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Table 2. The percentage of the female respondents who voted for the female candidate (Ananda-Mushaffa), indicated by yes/ya.

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</tr>
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</table>

In the interview, the respondents provided an agreement and disagreement in relation to the female candidacy in this mayoral election. Overall, the evaluation of the female candidacy cannot be separated from their religious/Islamic interpretation. In responding to a question of a female candidate presence, respondent coded P1 expressed it as,

“a new phenomenon …I also know her personally because of where I live…I also know her that she was in the Indonesian beauty pageant contest and has been in politics…”

Respondent P1 expressed her support based on her personal acquaintance and her knowledge about the candidate’s popularity and political career. Respondent P4 admitted to having a familial connection with the female candidate and delivered full support of the candidacy,

"…as a woman, I am proud to see her as the candidate and as a mother, so people do not think women just stay at home, but women can also lead."

P4 shows the role model impact to other women to participate in politics and male-dominated fields. However, P2 expressed her reluctance in having women as leaders based on her religious/Islamic interpretation, “…men are more charming as leaders compared to women….” The other students did not show clear support or contradiction to a female candidacy, for example, by saying, "I think it is fine for a woman to be a candidate."

In this election, the female candidate, namely Ananda, has been known in politics as she was the head of Banjarmasin’s local parliament. Her political career started since she was young at Golongan Karya Party, the long-established party in Indonesia that nominated her as the mayor candidate. She is also from a family with a strong political connection. Amongst all candidates, she was the youngest, but her familial and professional background provides her with political networks and financial resources, essential elements for winning elections (Aspinall et al., 2021; Satriyo, 2010).
Media access

Media access, mainly social media, was mentioned by respondents to be the primary source to get information about the election and the candidates. Instagram and WhatsApp were the major social media platforms used (84.6% used by the female respondents).

P1 respondent explained,

“I know the female candidate not just from the social media platforms, …. I know the social media platforms used by Hajjah Ananda are Facebook and Instagram. These platforms are used to inform the public about her activities and programs…. I rarely access radio and television, so I get information through social media….”

All other respondents also expressed their familiarity with social media platforms in learning and following the female candidate’s activities and programs.

Table 3: Social media platforms were the dominant media access to know the candidates

Q15. How do you know the candidate? Select all that applies

P3 explained,

“I learn about the female candidate mostly from Instagram and I got some messages on WhatsApp about her campaigns…. The content of Instagram was about her campaign visits and activities, and her visions and missions…. I also know that she has many followers…mostly young people….”

P4 also expressed her familiarity with the candidate by following her Instagram,

“I follow her Instagram…. I know she did social interactions with people, and she uploaded her visions and missions, various campaign visits…. She has many followers and has more young or millennial followers.”
P2 did not show much interest in the female candidate, but she explained, “…I know she uses Instagram to promote her candidacy, the content is similar to the one on the street banners, she uploaded her visions and missions....”

P5 also did not show much interest in the female candidate but she confirmed that Instagram was used actively by the candidate for campaigns, “I know she uses Instagram...contains her works, activities, and visions and missions.... What I see her followers are mostly around her age.” Thus, social media platforms have been used actively in this election and the public was familiar with the platforms, whether the voters are interested in the candidates or not. Instagram has been mentioned most frequently by the respondents.

**Table 4: Social media platforms were the dominant sources used to access information about the candidates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q17. What sources of media do you mostly use to access the news of the candidates?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Television (TV)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Banners, posters, billboard signs, and other signs on the streets. (Baliho, poster, dan papan nama lain di jalan)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social media, including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. (Media sosial, termasuk Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, dll.)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents tend to use their knowledge to analyze the candidates by using social media to mainly access the candidates’ programs (54%). The respondents tend to use social media to access the candidate’s programs and activities rather than news about her personal life. It may be because these respondents are students of social and political sciences, but the candidates’ personal life and identity were still attractive (27%).

Strandberg (2013) argued that the use of social media for political activities could predict voting behavior. Indonesia now has the fourth most extensive users of social media in Asia, unlike in the previous elections, where internet use was still limited (Mujani & Liddle, 2010). Indonesia's number of internet and social media users keeps increasing, with 61.8% of the population in 2021 (Data Reportal, 2021). Respondents of this study mostly mentioned Instagram and WhatsApp to describe the social media campaign platforms and how respondents learned about the candidate, her activities, and political programs. The finding is similar to female voters in Malaysia where social media was the most used and trusted source for getting electoral information (Zakuan et al., 2018).

The candidates’ programs accessed by the respondents may demonstrate the critical democrats (Mujani et al., 2018), and the interest in candidates’ personal life and identity may illustrate the effect of religion and regionalism at the local elections (Strachan, 2014).

The relationship between news consumption of various media sources and life preferences has been complex (Swart et al., 2017). Electoral-related information is essential in shaping voting behavior. The lack of local information may increase American political
polarization (Darr et al., 2018) and women’s reluctance to vote in Pakistan (Gine & Mansuri, 2018). More newspapers exposure may increase American voter turnout (Gerber et al., 2009), and information on political education can also increase voter turnout in Mozambique (Fafchamps et al., 2020). However, more internet access in Germany had decreased it (Falck et al., 2014).

Television consumption in Indonesia is not politically divided as in the US (Ksiazek et al., 2019), and debates on television have been the campaign norm. The use of television campaigns pronounces the personalization of candidates through images (Garzia, 2020). While television debates do not always affect voters directly, they may do so indirectly (Goldberg & Ischen, 2020). Furthermore, television news accessed may increase voter turnout (Ksiazek et al., 2019). In this study, most respondents used social media rather than television to access news and electoral-related information. However, television debates were also carried out. Further research is needed to see the effect of television debates. Nevertheless, social media and the internet analyzing the debates and online polling have also become popular, which makes television debates indirectly affect voters.

Since social media was used intensively by the female candidate based on observation, the support or opposition towards this female candidate can also be identified easily by how much information the respondents had about the candidates on these platforms. The interview revealed that if respondents were reluctant to support female candidacy, they did not know much about the content in the female candidate’s Instagram and her followers. The pandemic Covid-19 had made social media access one of the reasonable measures for political support among Indonesian young generation with high internet literacy.

The role of family and peers

In this research, the role of parents is still convincing, with 38.5% asked their parents before voting and 34.6% had the same choice as their parents. This result confirmed Siegel-Stechler (2021) on the strong correlation between parents’ encouragement and children’s voting turnout.

However, more than 20% admitted making their own decision and had a different vote from their parents. This small gap between these groups demonstrates that the respondents were able to make their own political decision without so much family influence. It confirms the research on the relationship between family and political participation (Brooks, 2002). Fauzi et al. (2019) found that Indonesian parents of urban families tend to let their children making their own voting decisions and having fewer political discussions because the parents believe that the media and the General Election Commission have provided much information on elections. The respondents who disclosed their discussions with their parents but still decided their own choice differently from their parents or did not disclose their votes to their family shows the respondents' capacity as children to critically observe and evaluate their parents' attitudes and values before making their own decisions (Ojeda & Hatemi, 2015). Although this research did not scrutinize the detail of political discussion to analyze the effect of parents’ political influence on their children, it shows a lack of support for Campbell et al. (1960) because children’s political decision is not always heavily influenced by their parents.

Previous research on the role of the family towards children's political participation can be seen in the effect of political discussion on children's political views (Johnson et al., 2019). It can be predicted through the pattern of family communication (Graham et al., 2020) and the family's role in children's left-wing affiliation based on social learning theory (Rico & Jennings, 2016).

Friends were also crucial in young people's political participation. It was illustrated by most of the female respondents discussing the candidates amongst themselves (61.5%).
confidence in the benefit of political education can be concluded from the capacity of respondents to keep their votes secret despite their political discussions with friends; it shows that social secrecy (Gerber et al., 2013) is respected. Voters may lack social secrecy by sharing their votes with family and friends which may influence their voting or lead to discomfort consequences (Gerber et al., 2013). This study's result also does not show the more substantial impacts of peers on voting compared to the impacts of parents, contrary to Ekstrom and Ostman (2013). It is because although the female respondents like discussing the candidates, the majority kept their votes secret (61.5%), and 38.5% of respondents analyzed the candidates by themselves while still keeping their votes secret. However, given the slight difference between the influence of family and friends and the nature of social-political science program students to discuss politics, it will be valuable to analyze the links further. It is worth noting that current research findings on the role of family and friends in voting behavior across countries are still mixed and complex.

Religion and Ethnicity

Indonesia's religious identity has never really been tested in Indonesian elections because most candidates are from the local dominant religious groups. It means that the predominantly Muslim society tends to have Muslim candidates or the people from the minority groups tend to be reluctant to join the political contestation. When they compete, they are more likely to lose, for example, Ahok (Chinese descendant and Christian-from an ethnic and religious minority group) vs. Anies Baswedan (local and Muslim - from the dominant group) at Jakarta gubernatorial election. It shows that Indonesians have a high tendency to vote for candidates from the same religious group. Nevertheless, further research is needed because mostly the contestation is among the Muslim candidates (members of the dominant group). Therefore, the competition is mainly between the Geertzian Muslim division, santri (orthodox) vs. abangan (heterodox) (Mujani, 2020). Even though there was a salience increase in religious polarization in Indonesia at the 2014 election as demonstrated by religious-related political parties, Indonesian voters generally do not have a solid attachment to any particular identity, including political party identity. It was due to critical democrats that consisted of younger, more urban, more educated, and middle-class voters that are believed to be more rational in vote choice (Mujani et al., 2018). Religious orientation was not influential compared to leadership and political party identification, with Islamic influence was limited only to explain voters for two big political parties (Liddle & Mujani, 2007).

Nevertheless, this research revealed that 53.8% of female respondents admitted their preference to vote for candidates belonging to the same religious group. It is very common for political candidates to use the title “Haji” for men and “Hajjah” for women in campaigns. These titles are used to gain sympathy for Muslim voters as they show that they had done an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca. For Muslims, this pilgrimage is believed to be highly recommended, thus they want to show the voters that they are good Muslims. All Muslim candidates in South Kalimantan put this title in their campaigns. It shows how the dominant religion, Islam, has an important role in political contestation in South Kalimantan.

Table 5: The majority preferred a candidate of the same religion
Q11. Please select one that applies
Interview findings also demonstrated their concern about religious consideration when voting, including their perception of a female candidate based on their religious interpretation. Respondent P2 expressed her objection to a female leader, “…in Islam, it’s better to have men as leaders, according to me…it’s less appropriate.” While respondent P1 said, “…in our religion (Islam), we know that leaders should be men, but for myself, it's not a problem…because she's also religious…if the candidate is not a Muslim, it may be different.”

Only one respondent (P3) expressed clearly that her focus was on the attitude of the candidate rather than the candidate’s religion, “I think attitude is more important rather than what religion (the candidate believes). People who vote based on religion are affected by their environment…but if the candidate is not a Muslim but showing a good attitude, I think people will still vote.”

Even though some respondents believed that her religious belief/Islam does not forbid women to be leaders and supported women leaders, but when the respondents were asked to rank their preference to consider for making voting decisions, religion was ranked second place after the program evaluation.

American politics cannot be separated from racial identity. Empirical evidence shows that misperception tends to occur when constituents are deciding to vote amongst candidates of a different race (Jacobsmeier, 2015). This study found that 80% of respondents claimed that ethnicity did not affect how they voted and ethnic identity was not mentioned as necessary during the interview. However, given that 73% of voters were also Banjaresse and all candidates were from the same ethnic group, further research is needed.

Religious and ethnic identity may affect voters in the election and most voters prefer candidates of the same religious group or avoid voting for candidates of the minority groups due to in-group preference (Kalkan et al., 2018). Religion may affect voting behavior depending upon the religious context and its interactions, whether voters live in a solid religious context with high intensity of interaction or not (Goldberg, 2014). In the US, religious factors cannot be separated from a racial identity where opposite directions emerge between evangelical white and evangelical African Americans (Lockerbie, 2013).
Ethnocultural factors cannot be separated from economic considerations in voting and political party affiliations (DeCanio, 2007). However, in Banjarmasin, most of the population consists of one ethnic and religious group (Banjarese and Muslims). It may lead ethnical issues less controversial, and Islam may only affect voting behavior in its interpretation of women as leaders. Huber (2012) argues that “ethnicization increases when group identity becomes more salient to vote choice” (Huber, 2012, p. 986).

Table 6: The majority did not consider ethnicity is important
Q12. Please select one that applies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to vote for a candidate who belongs to the same ethnic group than I do. (Saya lebih memilih kandidat yang memiliki suku sama dengan saya.)</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not consider ethnicity is important for my vote. (Saya tidak menganggap suku penting dalam menentukan pilihan.)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please explain (Yang lain, silakan jelaskan)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevertheless, this study did not show the salience of ethnic group identity amongst respondents even though further research is needed because of its homogenous nature of ethnic and religious identity. Mujani and Liddle (2010) believe that religion and regionalism did not affect voting much, but Strachan (2014) argues they are essential for local elections. However, this study confirms Rizzo et al.’s (2002) research that Islamic interpretation matters in perceiving women in politics. Thus, it is more about how people interpret religion in women's political participation than what religion people believe. So, we can find that people of the same religious group may have a contradictive position in perceiving women in politics. Moreover, it is not about the division between Sunni and Shi’ah as the majority of Indonesian Muslims are Sunni, and all respondents in this study are Sunni.

Political Party and Voters’ perception of the candidates’ age and programs (leadership)

This study shows that the female respondents considered the candidates' individual figure, or the leaders' role was more important (77%) than political party identification (23%). The interview also revealed that political party was not influential in voting choice. None of the interviewed respondents talked about the political party consideration when voting. They also did not mention or indicate in the survey about accessing the political party websites to check the candidates.

Table 7: The majority voted based on the individual candidate figure rather than the candidates’ political party affiliation
Q13. Please select one that applies.

The online surveys and interviews show that all respondents preferred to vote based on the candidates’ individual figure rather than their political party. Although the female candidate was nominated by the long-established political party in Indonesia, none of the respondents mentioned it in the interviews. Hence, it confirms the previous finding that Indonesian voters are not strong partisans (Mujani et al., 2018), unlike Americans (DeCanio, 2007; Ksiazek et al., 2019). Most of respondents also expressed their priority of the candidates’ programs and preference for young leaders (50%); it may describe the presence of critical democrat characteristics (Mujani et al., 2018) as these respondents are young, more politically educated, and live in an urban area. Young women candidates may increase their electability compared to old women candidates (Prihatini, 2019). This finding confirms the young leader preference as the female candidate is the youngest candidate in this election.

Conclusion

As stated earlier in this article, this study aims to analyze the voting behavior of college student who are studying social and political sciences. The authors intentionally selected this group of respondents with the purpose to get almost similar levels of education, including the level of political knowledge and interest, age, and socioeconomic factors. Education, age, and socioeconomic factors such as income are proven to be affecting factors in voting behavior. But by selecting college students, the authors intend to understand the voting behavior of young educated but no income voters. Therefore, the effects of education, age, and socioeconomic factors are not much discussed and analyzed. Most research on voting behavior is quantitative, but this study focuses more on understanding voters' motivation beyond numbers. To investigate gender-related issues in voting, religious interpretation may be equally crucial as religious membership, and, in most cases, it cannot be separated from culture and tradition. Structural barriers may be shaped by religious-cultural context. This study illustrates that college students tend to vote for male candidates, and female candidates’ support is more likely from female voters. However, it is worth remembering that the assumption that women vote for women is too simplistic and the current political context also matters (Campbell & Heath, 2017). College students who study
social and political sciences demonstrated the capacity to vote based on evaluating candidates' programs rather than candidates' personal identity. However, religious interpretation matters, and it may lead to the preference of male leaders. During the pandemic Covid-19, the social media role for campaigns increased. As media is increasingly used to navigate voting choices, it is essential to deliver reliable information, monitor hoaxes, and educate constituents. However, political information and political knowledge do not guarantee bias-free electoral decisions. Nonetheless, the lack of information, misinformation, and lack of political education may enhance confusion that increases voters to use heuristics (Dancey & Sheagley, 2013), the practice of vote-buying (Siswanto et al., 2020), or unfairly benefited the incumbents because of their social policy (Zucco Jr., 2013).

The family's role is still vital in voting, while peers' influence, ethnicity, and party identification are less influential. Young female educated voters do not guarantee support for female candidates. This study found that it may be affected by highly patriarchal culture and religious interpretation. Islam itself may provide hindrance as well as support for women's political participation. It all depends on how people interpret Islamic teaching about the role of women. Future research is vital to analyze the incumbent effect because the winner was the incumbent and incumbents might possess huge advantages to win (More et al., 2017).

References


