International Journal of Technology and Education Research

https://e-journal.citakonsultindo.or.id/index.php/IJETER

E-ISSN: 2986-0733

Political Capital Strategies In Sherly Tjoanda's Victory In The 2024 North Maluku Governor Election

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the political capital strategies employed by Sherly Tjoanda in winning the 2024 North Maluku Governor and Deputy Governor Election through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using the case study method. Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation. The analysis was conducted using the concepts of economic capital, social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital proposed by Pierre Bourdieu and reinforced by Robert Putnam's theory of social capital. The results indicate that Sherly Tjoanda's victory was not determined solely by electoral support but was the result of the accumulation and conversion of various forms of capital she possessed. Economic capital played a role in supporting the effectiveness of the campaign and political mobilization. Social capital was evident in the strength of political networks, support from elites and community leaders, and the high level of public trust formed through bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Cultural capital was reflected in political communication skills, leadership capacity, and the articulation of development programs aligned with community needs. Meanwhile, symbolic capital emerged as the most dominant factor through the social legitimacy derived from Sherly Tjoanda's image as a female leader and the successor to Benny Laos's political legacy. The findings of this study indicate that success in local political contests is heavily influenced by political actors' ability to effectively manage and convert various forms of capital within the political arena.

Keywords: Political Capital, Social Capital, North Maluku Regional Elections, Sherly Tjoanda.

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INTRODUCTION

Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) are an arena of political competition determined not only by electoral support alone but also by a candidate's ability to manage the various political resources at their disposal. From a political sociology perspective, a candidate's victory can be understood as the result of the accumulation and conversion of various forms of capital operating simultaneously within a political arena. The 2024 North Maluku Regional Head Election is a fascinating local political phenomenon to study, particularly regarding Sherly Tjoanda's victory, as she successfully garnered public support amid the region's complex political dynamics. This victory cannot be separated from the political actor's ability to leverage her economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital to secure legitimacy and public support.

The theory of capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu explains that an individual's position and power in society are determined not only by the possession of economic capital but also by social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu's (1986), economic capital relates to the possession of material resources such as money and assets, while cultural capital encompasses knowledge, education, skills, and competencies acquired through socialization and education. Meanwhile, social capital consists of networks of social relationships that can be leveraged to gain specific advantages, whereas symbolic capital takes the form of honor, prestige, or recognition that an individual attains within their social environment. These four forms of capital are interrelated and can be converted into one another, thereby becoming sources of power that influence the position of individuals and groups within a social arena

Pierre Bourdieu explains that social and political practices are determined not only by economic power but also by various other forms of capital that are interrelated and convertible into one another. Economic capital refers to material resources that can be used to support political activities, such as campaign funding, business networks, and the ability to access financial resources. In the context of regional elections, economic capital serves as a crucial instrument for building political infrastructure, expanding campaign reach, and increasing a candidate's visibility among the public.

In addition to economic capital, Bourdieu emphasizes the importance of social capital—which takes the form of networks of relationships, trust, and social ties—that enables individuals to gain certain advantages in the political arena. Social capital is a critical factor because a candidate's success is often determined by their ability to build networks with political elites, community leaders, social organizations, and interest groups that influence voter preferences. In the context of Sherly Tjoanda's victory, the social networks formed through political connections, local communities, and support from various community groups are relevant

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aspects to analyze.

The concept of social capital is further elaborated by Robert Putnam, who views social capital as a characteristic of social organizations consisting of networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation to achieve common goals. Putnam emphasizes that levels of trust and public participation in various social activities can enhance the effectiveness of collective action. In the arena of local politics, the existence of strong social networks enables candidates to gain broader social legitimacy. Putnam also distinguishes social capital into two forms: “bonding social capital,” which strengthens relationships within homogeneous groups, and “bridging social capital,” which connects diverse social groups. Both forms of social capital can serve as important factors in explaining how political support is formed and develops during the regional election process.

The theory of social capital developed by Robert D. Putnam positions social relationships as the primary resource for enhancing the effectiveness of community life and governance. According to Putnam (1993), social capital is a characteristic of social organizations consisting of networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation to achieve common goals. Strong social capital encourages civic participation, strengthens social solidarity, and enhances the effectiveness of public institutions and the quality of democracy. In his work *Making Democracy Work*, Putnam demonstrates that the success of local governments in Italy is significantly influenced by high levels of social trust, a tradition of citizen participation, and a well-developed network of civil society organizations. Thus, social capital serves as a crucial foundation for creating effective, accountable, and responsive governance that addresses the needs of the community.

Bourdieu also identifies cultural capital as a resource derived from education, knowledge, competencies, experience, and individual abilities recognized by society. Cultural capital enables a political actor to build an image of competence, credibility, and leadership capacity in the public eye. In modern political competition, cultural capital is often manifested through political communication skills, organizational experience, and the ability to propose development ideas and programs that are acceptable to the public.

Furthermore, symbolic capital is a crucial form of capital as it relates to the honor, prestige, reputation, and social recognition a political actor attains. Symbolic capital can stem from social status, a leadership image, a family’s track record, or moral legitimacy recognized by society. According to Bourdieu, symbolic capital is often the most effective form of capital because it generates power through public recognition and trust. In the context of the 2024 North Maluku Regional Election, the symbolic capital associated with Sherly Tjoanda has the

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potential to influence public perceptions of her suitability and leadership capacity.

Based on this discussion, this study aims to analyze the political capital strategies employed by Sherly Tjoanda to win the 2024 North Maluku Regional Election through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital, which encompasses economic capital, social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital. Additionally, this study utilizes Robert Putnam's concept of social capital to explain how networks, trust, and social participation contribute to the formation of political support. This study is expected to make an academic contribution to the development of local political studies and to enrich the analysis of the relationship between political capital and electoral victory in local democracy in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research approach, which involves describing or explaining facts related to the conditions, processes, characteristics, or outcomes of a variable or object under study (Sudjana, 2011;52) Informants for this study were selected using purposive sampling, which involves selecting informants based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2019). Data collection was conducted through interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions to achieve a comprehensive understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Results of the 2024 North Maluku Regional Elections

The 2024 North Maluku Governor and Deputy Governor Election resulted in a victory for the Sherly Tjoanda–Sarbin Sehe ticket. According to the official tally by the North Maluku Provincial General Election Commission (KPU), the pair received 359,416 valid votes, or approximately 51.68 percent of the total valid votes. This result placed Sherly Tjoanda–Sarbin Sehe as the pair with the highest number of votes compared to the three other candidate pairs. Meanwhile, the Husain Alting Sjah–Asrul Rasid Ichsan ticket received 168,174 votes, the Muhammad Kasuba–Basri Salama ticket received 91,297 votes, and the Aliong Mus–Sahril Thahir ticket received 76,605 votes. (North Maluku KPU 2024)

This victory was an interesting political phenomenon because Sherly Tjoanda ran as a replacement for the late Benny Laos following his death during the 2024 regional election campaign. In subsequent developments, the Constitutional Court affirmed that the process of nominating Sherly Tjoanda as Benny Laos's replacement was in accordance with applicable legal

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provisions. (Constitutional Court Decision No. 258/PHPU.GUB-XXIII/2025). This situation indicates that Sherly Tjoanda's victory was influenced not only by electoral factors but also by her ability to manage various forms of political capital at her disposal.

From Pierre Bourdieu's perspective, the regional election arena is a space for power struggles that brings together various actors possessing different forms of capital. Therefore, Sherly Tjoanda's victory can be understood as the result of the accumulation and conversion of economic capital, social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital, all of which operate simultaneously within the political arena of North Maluku.

Analysis of Economic Capital

According to Pierre Bourdieu, economic capital is a material resource that can be used to secure a strategic position within a social or political arena. Economic capital encompasses asset ownership, access to financial resources, and the ability to support various political activities that require significant funding. (Bourdieu, 1986)

In the context of the 2024 North Maluku regional election, economic capital plays a crucial role in supporting the campaign activities of the Sherly Tjoanda–Sarbin Sehe ticket. The geographical characteristics of North Maluku as an archipelago result in relatively high campaign costs compared to other regions. Mobilizing campaign teams, distributing campaign materials, organizing political events, and utilizing communication media all require adequate financial resources.

Findings from the research by Wahyuningtyas et al. (2025) indicate that the success of the Sherly–Sarbin campaign is closely tied to their ability to integrate digital and conventional media simultaneously. This strategy requires financial backing that enables the campaign to reach young voters through TikTok and Instagram, while also reaching segments of the population that rely more heavily on traditional media. (Wahyuningtyas, 2024)

From Bourdieu's perspective, economic capital functions not only as a funding tool but can also be converted into social and symbolic capital. The ability to provide campaign resources facilitates the formation of broader political networks and enhances the candidate's influence within society. Thus, economic capital serves as a crucial foundation enabling Sherly Tjoanda's various political strategies to operate effectively throughout the regional election process.

Analysis of Social Capital

According to Bourdieu, social capital is a resource that emerges from the network of social relationships possessed by individuals or groups. Social capital enables a person to gain

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support, trust, and access to various social resources that are beneficial in the political arena.(Bourdieu, 1986). This concept aligns with Robert Putnam's view, which defines social capital as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate cooperation toward shared goals. (Putnam, 1993). In the context of the North Maluku regional election, social capital was a key factor explaining Sherly Tjoanda's success in securing public support.

The political networks previously built by Benny Laos served as social capital passed on to Sherly Tjoanda. Support from political parties, local elites, religious leaders, community leaders, and civil society organizations provided a strategic advantage in the process of mobilizing voter support. Research by Ayunda et al. (2025) indicates that the success of the Sherly–Sarbin ticket was underpinned by their ability to build public trust through direct engagement with the community and the strengthening of pre-existing political networks. From Putnam's perspective, this phenomenon reflects the presence of both bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital is evident in the solidarity of the support base, which shares an emotional connection with Benny Laos. Meanwhile, bridging social capital is evident in Sherly Tjoanda's ability to reach broader segments of the public beyond her traditional support base. Consequently, social capital served as a crucial instrument in expanding the Sherly–Sarbin ticket's political support base and strengthening their social legitimacy throughout the regional election.

Analysis of Cultural Capital

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital encompasses the knowledge, education, skills, competencies, and capacities of individuals that garner social recognition within society (Bourdieu, 1991). In the political arena, cultural capital serves to build a candidate's image of competence and leadership capacity. Sherly Tjoanda successfully built cultural capital through her relatively effective political communication skills. The campaign focused not only on image-building but also on conveying a vision for regional development deemed relevant to the needs of the people of North Maluku. Research on Sherly–Sarbin's campaign strategy indicates that this pair employed a communication approach that was adaptive to the social characteristics of North Maluku's society. The ability to tailor political messages to the needs of the community constitutes a form of cultural capital that strengthens a candidate's appeal. From Bourdieu's perspective, cultural capital can be converted into symbolic capital when the public recognizes the competencies possessed by a political actor. Therefore, communication skills and the ability to understand the community's needs became factors that strengthened Sherly Tjoanda's position in the regional election race.

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Analysis of Symbolic Capital

Symbolic capital is a form of capital related to honor, reputation, prestige, and social recognition. According to Bourdieu, symbolic capital is often the most effective form of capital because it generates legitimacy through public recognition.

In the 2024 North Maluku regional election, symbolic capital was a highly prominent factor in Sherly Tjoanda's victory. Her status as Benny Laos's successor created a strong emotional resonance among the public. Benny Laos, who already had a broad political support base, indirectly facilitated a transfer of political legitimacy to Sherly Tjoanda.

Research on Sherly Tjoanda's personal branding indicates that her image as a female leader, a family figure, and the successor to Benny Laos's legacy were key elements in shaping public perception (Neni, 2026). This symbolic capital provided a political advantage that would be difficult to achieve through economic or social capital alone.

Furthermore, Sherly Tjoanda's victory also holds symbolic significance for the representation of women in local politics. Several recent studies indicate that Sherly's success serves as evidence that voters in North Maluku are beginning to make more room for women's leadership in the regional political arena. Thus, symbolic capital functions as the culmination of the conversion process of various other forms of capital. The economic, social, and cultural capital possessed by Sherly Tjoanda ultimately gained public legitimacy and transformed into symbolic capital that reinforced her electoral victory.

CONCLUSION

Sherly Tjoanda's victory in the 2024 North Maluku Regional Election demonstrates that political success is determined not only by electoral strength but also by the ability to manage various forms of capital within the political arena. Based on an analysis of Pierre Bourdieu's theory, this victory resulted from the accumulation and conversion of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital operating simultaneously. Economic capital played a role in supporting various campaign activities, political mobilization, and the dissemination of information to the public in the archipelagic region of North Maluku. Social capital is evident in the strong political networks built through the support of political parties, community leaders, religious figures, and pre-existing social relationships. From Robert Putnam's perspective, this success is also underpinned by social trust, social networks, and both bonding and bridging social capital, which broaden the base of political support.

Cultural capital is reflected in Sherly Tjoanda's ability to establish effective political communication, convey a relevant development vision, and demonstrate leadership capabilities

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that have earned recognition from the public. Meanwhile, symbolic capital emerged as the most dominant form of capital, as it relates to social legitimacy, reputation, and the political image associated with her as a female leader and successor to Benny Laos's legacy. This symbolic capital successfully strengthened public trust and enhanced her electoral appeal. Thus, this study concludes that Sherly Tjoanda's victory in the 2024 North Maluku Regional Election was the result of her successful management and conversion of various interrelated forms of political capital. This finding reinforces Pierre Bourdieu's argument that success in the political arena is determined by an actor's ability to utilize all available resources to secure political legitimacy and power. Sherly Tjoanda's victory in the 2024 North Maluku Regional Election demonstrates that political success is determined not only by economic capital but also by the ability to accumulate and convert social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is the most dominant factor in building political legitimacy and public trust.

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