

Incumbency Disadvantages

Local Election and Populism in Indonesia

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Abstract—Incumbent is a very favorable political position on the election. The results of the study in many kinds of literature suggest that a strong candidate in the election is the incumbent because it has resources and can use its position to campaign. This paper shows a different fact, where the incumbent experienced a defeat in local elections by raising cases in Aceh and South Sulawesi in the 2017 election. In two areas where field research was conducted intensively before and after the local election showed that incumbent policies that did not integrate with populist policies during local heads affected voters choices. The main argument in this paper explains that a policy that is not populist can cause incumbency disadvantage. The more populist policies carried out by the incumbent, the more likely it is to win. This article concludes that populism is a major trend in local elections so that candidates without welfare and pragmatic issues seem difficult to win voters and win elections.

Keywords—incumbency, populism, policy, local election

I. INTRODUCTION

Some questions will be asked when the incumbent did not win the election, why did the incumbent lose? Though, some of its resources and advantages are not owned by the challenger [1]. In many cases incumbents have a significant increase in the number of votes compared to previous elections, allowing the incumbent to be re-elected [2, 3, 4]. Despite the fact that the development of democracy has made the elections more competitive so often the incumbent position does not guarantee to always win the election [5]. Some studies mention the incumbent defeat caused by ideological reflection of voters [6], congressional-bureaucratic relationships, pork barrel spending, campaign finances,

declining party attachments [7], new voters [8] or social and political tensions [5]. Based on the above comparison, being an incumbent has the advantage of potential losses. This article will focus on why incumbent disadvantages. Research on incumbency disadvantages already exists, as mentioned above but they tend to party issues and ideological factors of voters. No one has seen the aspect of policy and voter pragmatism. As we found in the case of Indonesia, particularly elections at the local level, the incumbent has failed to be re-elected due to unpopular policies. In short, our main argument explains that a policy that is not populist can cause incumbency disadvantage.

In Indonesia the study of populism is still rare, some conclude that populism is the shoot of the welfare state, while on the other hand, it is the modus operandi of power [12, 13]. Welfare state campaigns that adorn the tagline of local politicians in Indonesia have indicated the existence of a transformative democratic politics in various regions. Politicians become increasingly dependent on developing populism and charismatic leadership in mobilizing and managing political support. In another context, some scientists call “populism in politics” as a model of charismatic relations between voters and politicians [15]. Others call populism the majority political movement [16]. Another definition states that populism as a political appeal to the people, and a claim to legitimacy that rests on the democratic ideology of popular sovereignty and majority rule [17]. However, the possible definition to explain populism in our study is the relationship between politicians and voters through pragmatic programs or policies used to mobilize and manage political support in elections.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

We research two areas namely Aceh and South Sulawesi. The study was conducted before and after the concurrent elections in February 2017. The collected data was the result of in-depth interviews with some key informants in the two regions such as candidates, party members, village heads, and other general public. We also inventory data from archives of local regulations and newspapers on the various policies incumbents and programs offered by challengers. □

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. *Populism and Pragmatism*

In political science, these two terminologies can be interrelated when used for policy analysis. Both explain how is the relationship between government or politicians with the people. Populism, as we have described above, is a political style to mobilize voters and gain public sympathy. Meanwhile, pragmatism is the underlying consideration of issues that are interpreted in material or pragmatic terms include economic, expedience, practicality, or personal self-interest [18]. In conclusion, populism connects politicians with voters through interim policy while simultaneously pragmatism becomes a policy principle and recognition from the community where issues or programs that are economical, useful, practical, or self-interest become the determinants of public support at the time of the election.

B. *Local Election in Two Districts* □

In February 2017 all over Indonesia held concurrent regional head elections (pilkada serentak) in 101 regions: provinces, districts, and cities. In the elections of 2017, there were 37 incumbents who won elections from 61 incumbents participating which means more than 60.65 percent while others (39.35 percent) suffered defeat [14]. This means that quite a few incumbents in the local election have not managed to take advantage of their position. Two of them (incumbent was not re-elected) in Banda Aceh, Aceh province and Takalar, South Sulawesi province.

In the province of Aceh precisely in the elections Banda Aceh City, the capital of Aceh province, showed incumbency disadvantages, incumbent lost in elections 2017. The mayor of the incumbent is the first woman as mayor, has been sitting in two periods, as deputy mayor and mayor of Banda Aceh City. The incumbent candidates are Illiza Sa'aduddin Djamal and Farid Nyak Umar who are represented by two local parties namely Partai Aceh and PDA, and two national parties, PKS and PPP. While the candidate pair of challengers are Aminullah Usman and Zainal Arifin which carried by six national parties, Golkar, PAN, PKB, Gerindra, PBB, and Nasdem. Actually, these two candidates, Illiza Sa'aduddin Djamal and Aminullah Usman are the same competitors in the previous elections in 2012 ago. However, the results of the current vote show the range of numbers of votes far enough when compared with the difference in the previous local election vote, when Illiza Sa'aduddin Djamal and Farid Nyak Umar won. Incumbent obtained 30.207 votes or 33,23 percent while the candidate challenger 60.689 votes or 66,77 percent.

In Takalar district, an area bordering Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi province, the election is also head to head between incumbent and challenger. The incumbent candidates are Burhanuddin Baharuddin and Muhammad Natsir Ibrahim, both regent and deputy regent of Takalar for the period 2012-2017. The incumbent candidate is carried by a majority party in the local parliament (DPRD) with seven political parties, namely Golkar, PAN, Democrat, Hanura, PDIP, Gerindra, PPP, Hanura, PKPI, and PBB. Meanwhile, candidate challenger is the couple Syamsari Kitta, and Achmad Dg Se're, which only carried by two parties only, Nasdem and PKS. Election results show that the incumbent was defeated with margin 1,16 percent or 2.023 votes.

C. *Policy, Populist and Unpopulist Program*

We found that the defeat of the incumbent was caused by the policies they pursued during the Mayor and Bupati. "Campaign discount" regarding Gordon and Landa [9] or "incumbency advantages as an account" regarding Mayhew [3] is inversely proportional to the result of the vote in the two elections above. The question then is why did the incumbent lose. We have collected the policies and programs of each incumbent and challenger candidate. For the case of Banda Aceh can be seen in Table 1 and Takalar's case see table 2.

In Banda Aceh, the two candidates used different issue domains in the campaign, conflicting with each other. It is seen that the incumbent policy is not populist in contrast to the campaigned program of the challenger. Not to mention the issue of "women should not lead" who cornered the incumbent. This issue is part of the provisions of Islamic law which forbids women to become leaders. In another dimension, for example in gender balance, this became the first experience in Aceh, the mayor was a woman. In a literature declaring incumbency advantages to be an alternative which positively resulted in a successful female candidate in the next election. The incumbent position provides an opportunity for women candidates to demonstrate their capability as women in leadership positions, further proving it affects the party's views regarding pessimism about the chances of election of women candidates and their effects on other parties as well as proving their capacity in public [10]. In the end, however, different facts have occurred in the Banda Aceh elections which show that female incumbency cannot work to influence both the party and the voters. It appears that the incumbent is only supported by four parties only and the votes are few.

Table 1. Policy, Populist and Unpopulist Program in Banda Aceh Election

Incumbent	Challenger
The eviction and the prohibition of selling on Ulee Lheue beach at 18.00 pm without being given a solution with the presumption of selling late in the evening will lead to immoral activity by visitors	Ekonomi Kerakyatan (Community Economy)
Enforcement of the ban curfew (out of the house) without a mahram for women	Female leaders discriminate against women themselves
Provision of electricity and clean water is lacking	Promoting the availability of basic facilities such as electricity and water
Islamic Sharia tends to be sensational	Achieve a multicultural Banda Aceh in the enforcement of Islamic Sharia
The public space facilities and youth creativity are lacking	Provision of public space where to gather, learn together, interaction between communities, especially youth
Dakwah and Syiar Islam by Ulama from abroad	Prioritize local Ulama regarding Islamic da'wah and syiar

In short, the case of Banda Aceh elections as shown in table 1 above emphasizes five categories of unpopular policies, namely economic, public facilities, women, youth and the implementation of Islamic sharia. The five policies touched two segments of voters who in fact became the dominant voters in the district: women and beginner voters (youth). For Banda Aceh City, female voters numbered 76.080 people higher than male voters totaling 74.528 people out of a total of 150.608 voters [11]. Then when looking at the second voter segment of youth which amounts to 40 percent or 151.105 people, policymaking that is not populist cause the less support for the incumbent candidate.

At the same time in Takalar, incumbent policies were indeed not populist and different from the challenger (see table 2). Some policies that greatly affect the incumbent's popularity are the sale of state land with a loss value of Rp 15 billion. This policy turned out to be an act of corruption. The case of corruption has a significant influence which later became the campaign issue of his political opponent. In a number of campaigns and on candidate debates where authors are present, often sympathizers of incumbent political opponents shout out meaningful phrases "choose a clean leader, do not choose corruptor." Not to mention the mutations of government officials in Takalar district such as local officials, sub-district heads, teachers, and headmasters who according to some informants are often conducted by incumbent brother's intervention. Several informants, we interviewed also indicated the sale and purchase of positions. □

Table 2. Policy, Populist and Unpopulist Program in Takalar Election

Incumbent	Challenger
Sale of state land (Corruption)	Aid of cattle (1 cow per head of family)
Policy of mutation of government employees through incumbent brother	Procurement of Free Ambulance Car and Garbage Transport.
Life insurance for the community	Giving rewards to village priests and mosque imams (Hajj and Umrah)
Business capital assistance with partnership pattern	Free education and health
Scholarships for outstanding students	Free Marriage Fee

Meanwhile, challengers use highly populist programs to influence voter preferences. There are 22 programmatic politics by challengers, among them the most influential namely: "cow card" (aid of one cow per head of the family); hajj and umrah for the village priests, hamlet priests, and imam of the mosque; free education and health; and marriage fee assistance.

IV. CONCLUSION

Looking at the facts above, the incumbency disadvantages occur because of issues that are not populist. So the space is exploited by newcomers. Some unpopular policies and programs have degraded the popularity of the incumbent which then impacted voter choice in the voting booth. It is then benefited by the challengers by creating a populist program that is pragmatic-oriented. The more populist policies carried out by the incumbent, the more likely it is to win so that candidates without welfare and pragmatic issues seem difficult to win voters and win elections. These two cases of local elections in Indonesia show that the tendency of local voters is increasingly reflective but pragmatic with the policies and programs of local politicians. A phenomenon that often adorns the consolidation of democracy in the global south countries. □

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