

GRASSROOTS PATHWAY OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN INDONESIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PKB AND PAN IN THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTION

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Master's Study Program of Political Science at the Faculty of Social
Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts (M.A.)



by:

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UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INTERNASIONAL INDONESIA

DEPOK

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the persistent gap in women's representation in Indonesia's parliament despite institutional reforms intended to promote inclusivity. The National Awakening Party (PKB) and the National Mandate Party (PAN) share some similarities, including quota rules, open-list PR system, affiliation with Islamic social organizations, and the placement of women in strategic candidate list positions in 2024. Yet their outcomes diverged in the 2024 general election: PKB secured 23.5% women's representation, compared to PAN's 16.7%. Drawing on a comparative qualitative approach and the Most Similar System Design (MSSD), this study argues that PKB achieved higher women's representation by utilizing grassroots pathway that transformed social networks into political capital. This pathway advanced women's representation through three mutually reinforcing dynamics: strong linkages with Nahdlatul Ulama's women's organizations (Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU) generated a continuous pool of qualified women candidates; inclusive recruitment under consistent party commitment ensured their placement in winnable positions; and the accumulation of social and political capital enhanced their legitimacy and electoral support. By channeling organizational resources into electoral competition, PKB successfully implemented an informal strategy that contributed to women's representation more effectively than relying solely on quotas, pen-list PR system, or single candidate placement. This study concludes that in a clientelistic party system, grassroots pathway play a key role in sustaining women's political representation.

Keywords: Women's representation; Gender quota; Open-list PR system; Grassroots pathways; Clientelism; Indonesia

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Problem

Experts define women's representation by the percentage of seats held by women in national legislative bodies (IPU, 2025; P. M. Paxton & Hughes, 2014; Pitkin, 1972, p. 36). The global standard for women's representation was established through the 1995 Beijing Declaration, which targeted gender balance of 50:50 and reinforced it through target 5.5.1 in the Sustainable Development Goals (Norris, 2004, p. 160; UN Women, 2024). In order to ensure women's substantive influence in the legislative process, UN Women has set a minimum representation threshold of 30% in parliament (P. M. Paxton & Hughes, 2014, p. 160). Pursuing this standard, 94 countries have adopted affirmative policies through the reservation of seats or quotas for candidates. However, women's representation in parliaments globally still averages 27%, far below the proportion of women in the population (UN Women, 2023a). Based on this achievement, UN Women estimates that it will take approximately 39 years to achieve gender equality, which shows a gap between normative commitments at the global level and their achievement at the national level (UN Women, 2025).

Women's representation in parliament still varies across regions. In Asia and the Pacific, women hold only 22.1 percent and 20.1 percent of seats, far below the Americas and Europe, where the rates are 35.3% and 31.8% respectively (IPU, 2025). This gap is important because parliaments with a balanced number of men and women are more likely to produce policies that are fairer for all citizens. Countries with gender-balanced parliaments (50%) score 10 points higher in legal equality for economic opportunities, demonstrating the direct impact of women's presence in policy-making (World Economic Forum, 2023). The development of democracy also requires women's participation in government to reduce male dominance and build public trust in political institutions (UN Women, 2023b). These findings suggest that women's representation is not only about justice for women, but also about improving the quality of governance and the legitimacy of democracy. These regional disparities make it important to analyse how women's

representation varies across countries, especially where democratic systems coexist with strong cultural and social norms.

Indonesia is a unique case where a democratic system coexists with strong cultural and social norms, yet progress in women's representation in parliament has been slow. Since implementing affirmative action in 2004, the proportion of women in the House of Representatives has only risen from 11.8% to 22.1% in 2024—an increase of 10.1 percentage points in two decades (KPU RI, 2024). Although the percentage is better than in other Muslim-majority countries such as Turkey (19.9%), Pakistan (17%), India (13.8%), Algeria (7.9%), Iran (4.9%), and Nigeria (3.9%), however, women's representation in Indonesia still lags behind Egypt (27.7%) and Morocco (24.3%) (IPU, 2025). Indonesian society exhibits strong gender bias; 72% of citizens believe men are better political leaders, 63% believe men are better business executives, and 76% prioritise men when jobs are scarce (OECD, 2024). However, more women in parliament could increase GDP per capita, increase public investment in education and health, and accelerate the passage of the Domestic Workers Protection Bill, which has been pending for more than 20 years (E. S. Prihatini, 2021; Voa, 2024). This slow progress is perpetuating gender inequality in government and public life.

Indonesia initiated efforts to increase women's representation through affirmative policies regulated in Law Number 12 of 2003, which became effective in the 2004 elections. This law requires political parties to allocate at least 30% of the candidate list in each electoral district to women, although it does not explicitly define women's representation. This provision was reinforced through Law Number 7 of 2017, and KPU Regulation Number 10 of 2023 provides more detailed regulations. However, in five elections (2004–2024), the percentage of women in parliament has not reached the 30% threshold. This reflects the challenges in translating legal mandates into substantive equality. Although women make up 49.5% of the entire Indonesian population (137.9 million out of 278.7 million) their representation in parliament is still far from their demographic proportion, meaning that Indonesian women are not descriptively represented in the national parliament (BPS, 2024)

Undoubtedly, the issue of low representation of women is not only a problem in Indonesia, but also a global problem. Gender quotas aim to empower women that are underrepresented in politics, but political parties often see this effort as a formality because they focus more on short-term electoral success than investing in long-term structural reform. Political parties often see gender quotas as a “checkbox exercise”, where the mandate to promote women's equality is often undermined by a focus on winning elections (Krook, 2011). Political parties also allocate their resources to candidates who are more likely to win, and women are often excluded even though there is a gender quota obligation. This is due to deep-rooted biases in politics, where men are recruited more than women (Fox & Lawless, 2010). Therefore, although gender quotas can increase the nomination of women candidates on party lists, the chances of women being elected often fail because of deeper structural barriers to women's actual participation, making quotas more symbolic than substantive (Dahlerup, 2006). This situation shows a continuous cycle in which the implementation of quotas for political parties is considered a formality rather than a meaningful effort to achieve women's equality.

However, research shows that several countries such as Norway, Sweden and Rwanda have succeeded in achieving women's representation in parliament through various institutional reform efforts, gender quotas and strong political commitment (Krook, 2011; P. M. Paxton & Hughes, 2014). Likewise, in countries with a majority Muslim population such as Egypt and Morocco, the representation of women in both countries is very good at 27.7% and 24.3% (IPU, 2025). Although there is debate about Islamic tradition as a factor that reinforces patriarchy and limits the role of women in politics (Inglehart & Norris, 2003, p. 71), other research suggests that it is gender ideology that hinders women's representation, not religion itself (P. Paxton & Kunovich, 2003). This is also supported by empirical research which states that in both Muslim and non-Muslim societies, there are patriarchal norms that are obstacles to gender inequality, the main problem is not with Islam itself (Lussier & Fish, 2016, p. 55). In the Indonesian, some political parties show a significant trend of women's representation in the house of representative, while some other parties experience stagnation or even decline over time. This variation

in achievement raises a critical question: What explains the variation in women's representation across political parties in the Indonesian House of Representative?

Most studies on women's representation focus on institutional and structural factors as key determinants of women's electability, such as gender quotas and district magnituden (Stockemer, 2018), proportional systems (Curtin, 2003; Johnson-Myers, 2017; Norris, 2006; Tremblay, 2007), and the placement of women in favourable positions on legislative candidate lists (Gatto & Radojevic, 2025; Jankowski & Rehmert, 2025; Perdana & Hillman, 2020). This study shows that formal rules and party gatekeeping are crucial for increasing opportunities for women candidates. However, few studies explore how parties leverage non-formal factors—particularly the interaction between party structures and cultural orientations—to shape women's political opportunities. This gap is critical because parties with similar institutional frameworks and structures may produce different rates of women's representation. In Indonesia, these structural and cultural interactions often emerge through grassroots pathways that link parties with Islamic mass organisations to recruit, support, and mobilise women candidates. This study of grassroots pathways provides a largely unexplored explanation for variations in women's representation that cannot be explained by institutional and structural factors alone.

The weaknesses of political party institutionalism and widespread clientelism have reduced the effectiveness of institutional reforms in Indonesia, such as gender quotas and the open list proportional representation (PR) system (Aspinall et al., 2021; Perdana, 2017; E. S. Prihatini, 2019b). In Indonesia, the open-list PR system reinforces clientelism through the nomination of candidates who favour men or women with strong financial resources, and expensive electoral competition that disadvantages women with limited resources (Birbir et al., 2025; E. S. Prihatini, 2019b). This condition further limits women's chances of being elected, especially for those who do not have grassroots support, extensive political networks, or sufficient financial resources. Therefore, I argue that increasing women's representation in the long term depends not only on institutional reforms but also on the ability of parties to leverage grassroots pathways through structural and cultural links with civil society organisations. Through this pathway, parties

can recruit women with strong organisational experience, mobilise broad voter support, and provide sustainable political resources. This approach also reduces women candidates' dependence on exclusive elite networks, although these may provide access to political resources but often fail to build broad voter support.

The grassroots pathway is the route taken by women 'from below' through social movements, community organisations, and community activities that build political legitimacy and social capital without relying on political family connections (Choi, 2019). This pathway is based on individual agency theory, which considers organisational experience, social networks, and ideological commitment as the main forms of political capital that enable women to enter the electoral arena (Doneys et al., 2024). In Indonesia and Sri Lanka, the transition from grassroots activism to representative politics involves four processes: transfer, amplification, expansion, and translation (Jakimow et al., 2023). Although initially used to explain individual agents, this study applies the concept at the party level to analyse how internal structures, gender orientation of organisations, and party-social base relations shape or limit women's access to political office, with parties acting as gatekeepers of formal and informal candidate pathways (Kunovich & Paxton, 2005). In Indonesia, where political parties operate within a clientelistic system and weak institutional structures, candidate nomination often depends on informal mechanisms that prioritise personal networks, financial resources, and elite connections. This affects how women leverage their agents to navigate and negotiate access to party structures (Aspinall et al., 2021; Perdana, 2017).

This study will analyze political parties at the national level because national political parties play an important role as gatekeepers, participating in candidate selection and placement on candidate lists, which determines women's success in elections. National political parties play a role in reforming policies that can support women, but parties tend to select candidates who have political resources that actually hinder women's representation (E. S. Prihatini, 2019b). Party preferences depend on candidates who have connections with elites or political dynasties, which mostly benefit men (Perdana, 2017; Perdana & Hillman, 2020). Political parties place women in less advantageous positions even though gender quotas have been implemented. Women's electability faces informal barriers such as bias against

incumbents, electoral favoritism, and lack of transparency in candidate selection (Albaugh, 2022). Islamic networks also play a dual role because their institutionalism is weak; Islamic networks can mobilize grassroots support that may help or hinder women's candidacy (Aspinall et al., 2021). Therefore, conducting research on how national political parties select candidates, place candidates, and allocate cultural resources is crucial to understanding how these party attitudes influence women in facing structural and strategic challenges in politics. This study aims to provide a critical evaluation to improve women's representation.

Table 1. 1. The Growth of Women's Representation In Indonesian House of Representatives (2004-2024)

Political Party	2004	2009	2014	2019	2024
Nasdem	0,0	0,0	11,4	32,2	27,5
PDIP	11,0	18,1	19,3	20,3	23,6
PKB	13,5	25,0	21,3	20,7	23,5
Gerindra	0,0	15,4	15,0	17,9	23,3
Democrat	10,5	23,5	21,3	18,5	22,7
Golkar	14,1	17,0	17,6	22,4	22,5
PKS	6,7	5,3	2,5	16,0	17,0
PAN	13,5	15,2	18,4	15,9	16,7
PPP	5,2	13,2	25,6	26,3	
Hanura	0,0	16,7	12,5	0,0	

Note: All figures are percentages (%)

Source: Compiled from various sources by the author

The growth of women's representation in the Indonesian House of Representatives is shown in Table 1.1, specifically comparing PKB (National Awakening Party) and PAN (National Mandate Party). Between PKB and PAN in 2004, both had 13.5% representation of women when the affirmative action policy was first implemented. However, even though both parties had the same starting point, the trend of women's representation in PKB showed a higher trend compared to PAN. PKB reached its peak of women's representation in 2009 at 25% and remained stable until the 2024 general elections, at 23.5%. PKB is consistently among the parties with the highest representation of women in Indonesia. On the other hand, PAN has a stagnant trend in women's representation, with the percentage of women's representation in PAN reaching a high of 18.4% in 2014, before finally decreasing to 16.7% in 2024. This trend places PAN among the parties with low representation of women in Indonesia. Although PKB has not been able to achieve the 30% gender quota mandate, since the 2009 elections it has been able to maintain women's representation above 20%, which PAN has struggled to achieve in five election cycles.

The 2024 general election presented a striking anomaly: the PKB achieved 23.5% representation of women, while the PAN only achieved 16.7%. This occurred despite the fact that the literature on women's representation emphasises that quota policies, proportional representation systems and the nomination of candidates in strategic numbers are key determinants of women's representation. If this assumption is correct, parties with similar characteristics should achieve similar results. PKB and PAN share four similarities: *institutionally*, both are subject to quota rules and an open-list proportional representation system; *in terms of initial achievements*, both started the 2004 elections—the first year of quota implementation—with the same percentage, namely 13.5%; *in terms of candidate nominations*, in 2024 both placed women in strategic positions, PKB 47.5% and PAN 41.4%; and *culturally*, both are affiliated with Islamic social organisations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah (Mujani & Liddle, 2009, p. 577). These significant similarities but different outcomes make them ideal cases for the most similar system design and challenge explanations that rely solely on formal

institutional factors, requiring an analysis of non-formal structural-cultural dynamics within the parties, especially the effectiveness of the grassroots pathway.

This study aims to reveal the reasons behind the differences in women's representation between PKB and PAN in the 2024 general election. Using the Most Similar System Design (MSSD), the two parties were selected because they have several similarities: both are within the same institutional framework, achieved identical initial results when gender quotas were implemented in 2004, nominated women in strategic positions, and are affiliated with Islamic social organisations. Despite these similarities, the 2024 general election results show remarkable differences—PKB achieved 23.5% of women's representation, while PAN only achieved 16.7%. To explain these differences, I focus on the grassroots pathway as a potential causal factor, drawing on (Choi, 2019) framework and operationalising it through three mechanisms: party-organisation linkages; candidate selection and resources; and social and political capital. Therefore, I argue that grassroots pathways are likely to be a causal factor contributing to differences in women's representation in the PKB and PAN in the 2024 general election.

1.2 Research Question

1. What Explains the Variation in Women's Representation Across Political Parties in the Indonesian House Of Representative?

1.3 Research Objective

1. To explore the reasons behind the difference in women's representation between PKB and PAN in the Indonesian House of Representative in the 2024 general election.

1.4 Research Contribution

1. Theoretically, this research can contribute to the analysis of how political parties in a clientelistic system such as Indonesia utilize their cultural ties with Islamic organizations to support women's representation. Existing studies have mostly focused on the implementation of gender quotas and the

formal structural barriers faced by women, while studies on the role of informal party strategies are often overlooked.

2. In practical terms, this research can contribute by evaluating policies on women's representation in Indonesia, such as candidate recruitment strategies within parties, gender quota evaluations, and the mobilization of social organizations that serve as political pathways for women's victories. Although institutionalism is weak in Indonesia, political parties can leverage their grassroots networks to secure significant resources for women.

1.5 Structure of Thesis

Chapter 1 discusses the background and problematization of the problem, highlighting how the global situation, including Indonesia, despite the existence of gender quotas, women's representation in parliament has not been fully achieved, especially in Muslim-majority countries. Most existing research emphasises that quota policies, open list representation systems (PR), and the placement of women in strategic candidate lists are factors that influence women's representation, but the results still vary among parties that implement the same regulations and structures. This study shifts the focus to political pathways, arguing that political pathways through grassroots have a significant impact on the election of women to legislative seats. By conducting a comparative study between PKB and PAN, this study attempts to reveal how different political pathways have different impacts on the success of women's representation in the 2024 general election.

Chapter 2 discusses the research gap, theoretical framework, causal graph of hypothesis and alternative explanation. The research gap in this study is that research on women's representation has focused more on institutionalisation and party structures, while research on the political pathways adopted by political parties has not been explored much. The theoretical framework I use is Choi's 2019 political pathway theory, which explains the grassroots and elite pathways (Choi, 2019). The hypothesis of this study is that "Political parties that leverage grassroots pathways are more likely to achieve higher rates of women's representation than those that do not". My hypothesis is based on the argument that PKB implemented

a grassroots pathway strategy by utilizing its relationship with NU, especially Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU, to mobilize voters to support women's representation (Mahsun et al., 2021). NU also holds very progressive views in supporting women's political participation (Hamidah, 2016). In contrast, although culturally PAN has close ties with Muhammadiyah, PAN tends to rely on elite networks rather than mobilizing its grassroots base. Muhammadiyah also holds conservative views in supporting women's participation (Dewi, 2022; Perdana, 2017). Evidence from studies in countries with Muslim majorities, such as Morocco and Turkey, also shows that the Islamic parties PJD and AKP utilize grassroots networks to support women's representation (Škrabáková, 2017; Tajali, 2017). Therefore, informal strategies employed by political parties through grassroots pathway play a significant role in enabling women to navigate clientelistic systems and bypass elite networks.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology. I use Most Similar System Design (MSSD) method, case selection, data collection, and process tracing data analysis and validity and reliability to uncover the mechanism of causality of the results of women's representation in the national parliament in the 2024 elections in PKB and PAN.

The discussion of Chapter 4 is divided into two main sections that reflect the different strategies of the two parties. The first section discusses women's representation through grassroots pathways in the PKB. In this case, the PKB's strong links with NU women's organizations such as Fatayat NU, Muslimat NU, and pesantren networks created a strong supply of female candidates with organizational experience and broad social legitimacy. The PKB responded to the strength of these linkages with inclusive recruitment, strategic placement on candidate lists, and early resource support, while the candidates themselves mobilized their networks and political skills to win votes. The second section analyzes women's representation through elite pathways in PAN, where weak organizational linkages limit the number of qualified women candidates. PAN relies more on dynastic figures, professionals, or celebrities, and the party often provides minimal or late support, leaving candidates to rely on personal popularity or financial resources rather than grassroots legitimacy. By comparing PKB and PAN

based on three mechanism indicators—party-organization linkages, candidate selection and support, and social and political capital of candidates—this chapter explains why PKB achieved higher women’s representation than PAN in the 2024 general election.

Chapter 5 contains conclusions from the findings and limitations of the study, emphasising that grassroots pathways play an important role in the high level of women's representation in the PKB, while non-grassroots pathways such as those in the PAN provide limited access. This section highlights how grassroots-based recruitment systems are more inclusive for improving gender equality in the long term.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Previous Studies

Global studies on women's representation highlight the role of gender quotas, proportional representation (PR) systems, and ballot position as determinants of electability. Gender quotas have been shown to be effective in increasing the number of women in political office (Aili Mari Tripp & Kang, 2008; Allen & Cutts, 2016; Barnes & Holman, 2020; Dahlerup, 2006; Krook, 2006; Maryuni, 2015; O'Brien & Rickne, 2016; P. Paxton & Hughes, 2015; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009; Stockemer, 2018), and countries with PR systems generally have a higher proportion of women in national parliaments (Curtin, 2003; Golder et al., 2017; Johnson-Myers, 2017; Norris, 2004; Sibarani, 2024; Tremblay, 2007). The placement of candidates in lower positions on the candidate list is also often associated with greater chances of being elected (Gatto & Radojevic, 2025; Jankowski & Rehmert, 2025; Perdana & Hillman, 2020; Puskapol, 2019). However, the effectiveness of these factors is greatly influenced by the political dynamics and system design in each country. In the Indonesian context, the implementation of PR with an open list system triggers high-cost intra-party competition, so that strategic positions on the candidate list tend to be filled by candidates with strong social or financial capital (Birbir et al., 2025; E. S. Prihatini, 2019b). This condition suggests that a structural framework that is institutionally designed to benefit women does not necessarily produce similar results when implemented, thus requiring a study that examines the interaction between political structures and cultural contexts in shaping women's political opportunities.

Global literature states that there is a relationship between a high proportion of Muslims in the population and low representation of women, indicating that Islamic norms and values can limit political opportunities for women (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Lussier & Fish, 2016; Stockemer, 2015). This is in line with findings in Indonesia, where a conservative Islamic orientation that emphasises women's domestic roles also tends to be accompanied by rejection of affirmative policies such as women's quotas in parliament (White et al., 2024). However, there are

differing findings, where Islamist parties utilise Islamic values to maintain proximity to voters in a highly clientelistic political system (Fossati, 2020). Islamic women's organisations such as Fatayat NU and Rahima combine discourses of piety and gender equality to build legitimacy amid patriarchal norms (Rinaldo, 2013). For women candidates, connections with religious grassroots networks are a valuable source of social and material support to overcome financial and structural barriers in the open list proportional representation (PR) system (Aspinall et al., 2021). These findings show that the cultural role of Islam in Indonesian politics is not singular, but moves from a limiting factor to a provider of political resources, depending on ideological orientation and the dynamics of electoral competition.

These findings confirm that women's representation is not determined solely by electoral systems or cultural-religious factors alone, but how the two factors shape opportunities for access to the political arena. A number of studies on gender equality emphasise that the main barrier for women often lies in unequal access by political parties to the nomination process and distribution of campaign resources (Collignon, 2024; Fraga & Hassell, 2021; Janusz et al., 2022). Therefore, efforts to increase women's representation are not enough to simply change the rules through quotas and electoral systems, but also require strategies that ensure equal opportunities for women candidates to compete (Beer, 2009). This perspective is important for understanding the different approaches of political parties in overcoming these obstacles. One of the critical points that determine the success of women's representation is the candidate nomination process, where parties act as gatekeepers who open or close opportunities for women candidates.

Various studies show that the candidate nomination process is still dominated by gender barriers that reduce women's chances of being elected. Party elites often prioritise male candidates, place women in less strategic positions on the list, and impose additional requirements such as strong political capital, extensive networks, or close ties to elites, which women outside the circle of power rarely possess (Birbir et al., 2025; Jankowski & Rehmert, 2025; Luhiste, 2015; Niven, 1998; E. Prihatini & Halimatusa'diyah, 2024; Van Dijk, 2023). Advantageous positions are often given to incumbents or popular figures, while new women candidates tend to be excluded by informal rules such as seniority and

long track records (Cirone et al., 2021; Van Dijk, 2023). These barriers are not only rooted in the preferences of individual elites, but also in institutional patterns that systematically limit women's access from the early stages of candidacy.

Gender barriers in candidate nominations do not stand alone, but are reinforced by clientelistic practices that consolidate elite control. Loose formal rules allow elites to direct nominations in their political interests (Kelbel, 2020; Tromborg, 2021), while norms of seniority and re-nomination of incumbents ensure the circulation of benefits within male patronage circles (Cirone et al., 2021). In a clientelist framework, the distribution of resources and strategic positions depends on personal closeness or the ability to provide material benefits, so that women—especially newcomers—are eliminated from the outset. Political party support for women is often symbolic and not accompanied by adequate funding (Piscopo et al., 2022), exacerbated by high nomination costs and money politics that require large capital (Harahap et al., 2023). This pattern shows that clientelism is not merely a practice of political exchange, but a structural mechanism that maintains the status quo and systematically closes equal competition for women.

In line with the dynamics of clientelism, the success of women candidates in the costly open list PR system is often determined by their ability to access and mobilise grassroots networks as socio-political capital. This pathway includes the mobilisation of women's networks and religious organisations at the grassroots level, in addition to the political use of family ties (Aspinall et al., 2021). The recruitment of women candidates from political dynasties is also used by parties to meet quotas while optimising electability (Siti Zaetun & Mar'iyah, 2020). Connections with Islamic women's organisations such as Muslimat and Fatayat NU have proven to provide significant electoral support, even for candidates without large financial capital or political family ties, through networks that directly reach the voter base (Mahsun et al., 2021). A similar strategy was found among women candidates from PAN and PKB, with variations in the use of organisations, public figures, and personal networks (Suryani & Azmy, 2023). These findings show that amid the dominance of clientelism, grassroots power can be an alternative pathway that provides legitimacy and electoral support for women candidates through institutional linkages with women's organisations.

In an effort to achieve equal political access, institutional relations between parties and women's organisations have become a strategic pathway for converting cultural resources into electoral opportunities. PKB has close cultural ties with Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU, while PAN is affiliated with Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah; these networks function as a social base as well as a forum for women's political regeneration (Hurriyah & Wildianti, 2020; Perdana, 2017; Syamsiyatun, 2020). Although they have played a role in promoting women's interests, these organisations' contributions to increasing women's participation in public office are still limited, even though they often serve as training grounds for prospective legislators. Although non-partisan, Fatayat NU and Aisyiyah have a shared mission to work across parties to support more women in parliament so that they are influential enough to push for pro-gender equality policies (Hillman, 2018, p. 47). The strength of these cultural ties can be utilised by political parties not only as initial capital for women to break through the candidate selection process, which is often biased against non-elite backgrounds, but also as a strategic instrument in building a sustainable electoral support base and strengthening the party's position in political competition.

The findings of this study can be generalised to countries, both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim, that have parties with strong affiliations to social or religious organisations, where these institutional relationships serve as alternative sources for overcoming gender bias and navigating high-cost electoral competition in clientelistic systems based on grassroots mobilisation. In Indonesia, the Indonesian Women's Coalition (KPI) and Islamic Women in West Sumatra provide cadre development, training, moral support, and access to networks optimised by parties to promote the electability of women (Dewi et al., 2023). In Morocco, the PJD leveraged its social networks and women's wing, while in Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood relied on the Muslim Sisters for mobilisation (Škrabáková, 2017; Tajali, 2017). In Turkey, the AKP integrated its women's wing into the party structure, while Kurdish women's networks shifted the mobilisation of ethno-nationalist movements to the formal arena through the predecessor parties BDP/HDP (Sahin-Mencutek, 2016). In Algeria, Islamist parties used constituent services to reach women outside patronage networks (Benstead, 2021). This variety

shows that the integration of women's organisations into electoral politics can be an effective mechanism across political and cultural systems, provided that parties are able to convert these relationships into relevant political capital.

2.2 Grassroots Pathway

The grassroots pathway is rooted in the political pathway framework developed by Choi, which identifies key typologies of women's paths to political office in Southeast Asia: the elite pathway, which relies on family connections or political patronage; the grassroots pathway, which is built through active engagement at the community level; and a "middle" pathway that combines elements of both. The grassroots pathway emphasises individual agency—the ability of women to build political careers from the bottom up through social participation, community leadership, and belief in their own abilities—without relying on family patronage. This framework is important because it shows that women's success does not depend solely on policy interventions or elite support, but also on socio-political capital formed through direct experience in the community (Choi, 2019).

Women's individual agency at the community level builds valuable capital for competing in formal politics. Involvement in community organisations, religious groups, and social movements equips them with civic skills, social networks, and moral legitimacy that become electoral assets (Schlozman et al., 1994). These activities also build leadership capacity and mobilisation skills that distinguish grassroots candidates from elite candidates (Spark et al., 2019). However, this capital is often constrained by elitist candidate selection, patriarchal norms, and limited campaign resources (Jakimow et al., 2023). These obstacles are further complicated in Indonesia's open proportional system, which is characterised by intra-party competition and patron-client logic, where material resources and social networks are key factors in electability (Aspinall et al., 2021).

The Indonesian political context makes grassroots pathways relevant to analyse at the party level. As gatekeepers, parties have the power to expand or restrict women's entry into the electoral arena (Kunovich & Paxton, 2005). In clientelistic systems, social networks embedded in party affiliations are strategic assets for mobilising votes (Kitschelt, 2000). A strong community base, when

integrated into party strategies, can support women candidates to compete effectively (Bayo, 2021). Party wings play an important role as a bridge between party elites and local activists, providing mobilisation networks that expand opportunities for women's representation. Furthermore, religious organisations with structural links to parties can be effective sources of recruitment for women cadres (Mahsun et al., 2021).

Despite their potential, women activists often experience broken pathways due to limited financial, logistical and political access. The WFD report shows that mass organisations can be pipelines for women cadres, but their success depends heavily on structural support from parties to convert social capital into electoral power (WFD, 2022). Affirmative policies such as quotas are not enough to close the representation gap if they are not accompanied by support at the grassroots level (Ponce et al., 2020). Parties built top-down without local infrastructure tend to fail to articulate the interests of ordinary citizens, including women (Krishna, 2002). Conversely, women's involvement at the local level increases the supply of potential candidates and strengthens internal pressure for women's candidacy (Caul, 1999). Women candidates with previous political experience, whether in parliament, the bureaucracy, or large organisations, have a higher chance of being elected, but this opportunity is only optimally utilised when the party provides tangible support for their candidacy (Perdana & Hillman, 2020).

The strength of the grassroots pathway lies in the synergy between individual capacity and structural party support. In a supply and demand framework, qualified women candidates are available at the community level, but their representation depends heavily on the willingness of parties to recruit and support them (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995). The experience in India shows that recruiting women as field activists can transform the grassroots infrastructure to be more gender inclusive, reduce gatekeeping barriers, and open up promotion pathways from the local level to formal politics (Goyal, 2020). Thus, grassroots pathways are not only an alternative route for women to enter politics, but also an informal institutional strategy that can strengthen inclusive democracy in a political culture that is still dominated by clientelism.

In this study, the author defines grassroots pathway as a political party strategy to recruit and support women candidates who have organisational experience in religious social organisations. This definition adapts Choi's concept of grassroots pathways, which initially explained individual agency, into a framework for political parties as collective agencies (Choi, 2019). In this context, parties act as a bridge between women's social capital at the grassroots level—such as networks, community legitimacy, and organisational skills—and formal political opportunities. Parties that leverage this pathway recruit candidates from organisations such as Fatayat NU, Muslimat NU, or NGOs, which provide social legitimacy, networks, and organisational experience. Conversely, political parties that do not use this pathway recruit public figures, professionals, or political dynasties that have symbolic capital but few organisational experience and connections with the mass base. In competitive politics, the grassroots pathway provides greater opportunities for women because they bring organisational experience, are close to voters, understand the dynamics of elections, and have strong support from the mass base.

This study is limited to the context of the 2024 legislative elections in Indonesia, which take place under an open list proportional representation (PR) system with intra-party competition and a clientelistic political culture. The analysis focuses on political parties affiliated with Islamic social organisations with strong cultural ties. The concept of grassroots pathways used in this study applies when affiliated organisations have an orientation that is in line with gender equality, are active in politics, and are directly involved in the electoral process. The effectiveness of this pathway assumes a positive response from the party, in the form of the nomination of women candidates from the grassroots, recognition that these candidates have a chance of winning the election, and the party's willingness to provide resource support. External factors such as voter preferences for women candidates were not the main focus of the discussion, as this study focused on informal party strategies in leveraging women's social capital at the grassroots level for electoral purposes.

2.3 Hypothesis

Grassroots pathways are important because political parties that have linkages with women's organizations at the grassroots level can expand their political recruitment channels. Grassroots pathways play a role in providing a supply of women candidates who have social legitimacy and organizational experience. These networks form the basis for cadre development and provide strong social legitimacy for women candidates. Women's organizations at the community level nurture cadres through a tiered process before they enter the formal candidacy arena (Hurriyah & Wildianti, 2020). Through these informal linkages, parties obtain candidates who not only meet administrative requirements but also have substantial qualities to compete (Bayo, 2021; E. S. Prihatini, 2019a). In conclusion, grassroots pathways enable parties to obtain a supply of women candidates who are ready to enter politics.

In addition to providing a supply of women candidates, grassroots pathways add value to parties in overcoming structural barriers in the electoral system. The open-list proportional representation (PR) system encourages competition among candidates within parties and is based on clientelism, resulting in very high political costs (Aspinall et al., 2021). In such conditions, candidates with access to party elites and political resources are at an advantage (Devlin & Elgie, 2008). However, parties that leverage grassroots networks still have an advantage because women candidates from these pathways carry social legitimacy that makes them competitive even without significant financial capital (Mahsun et al., 2021). In this way, grassroots pathways help parties overcome recruitment biases that tend to favor candidates with significant capital.

Grassroots pathways also encourage parties to develop more inclusive recruitment mechanisms. The structure of linkages between parties and mass organizations creates recruitment channels that reach the community level. Women's organizations serve as a bridge between parties and their women voters, producing candidates who are close to their constituents (Aspinall et al., 2021). Although their influence in strategic decision-making is limited, the regeneration process within women's organizations has proven to produce more politically prepared candidates (Hurriyah & Wildianti, 2020). This shows that grassroots

pathways not only expand the reach of party recruitment but also increase the legitimacy of women candidates in the voters' eyes.

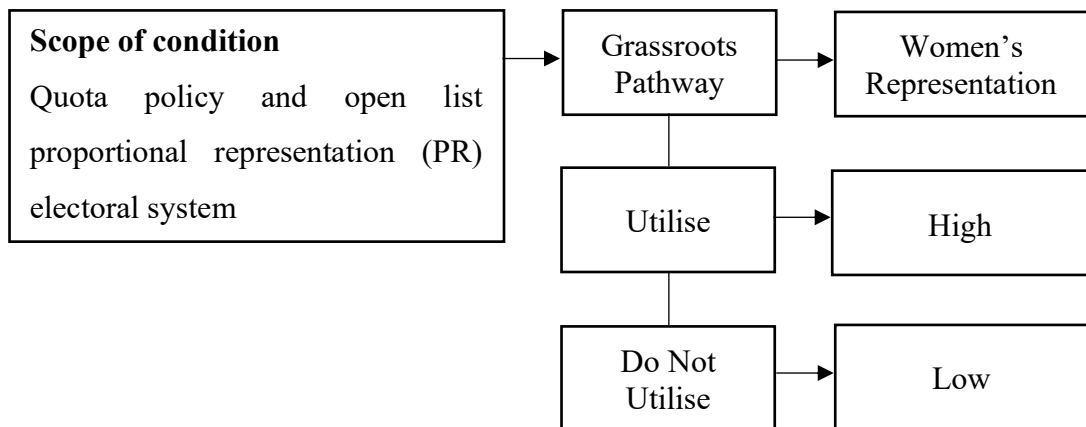
Internal party institutional support is the next factor that strengthens the role of grassroots pathways. Parties with pro-women internal policies, such as support for cadre training, placement in strategic candidate numbers and constituencies, and campaign funding support from the outset of the candidacy, help women win. A 30 percent quota for women candidates applies to all parties, but research shows that the level of success of women's representation is not determined by party ideology, but rather by the internal capacity of parties to substantially support women candidates (E. S. Prihatini, 2020). In other words, women's representation depends more on a combination of the strength of grassroots networks and institutional party support. Grassroots pathways also strengthen parties' ability to build candidates with significant social capital.

Women candidates who emerge from grassroots pathways usually have an organized support base, which parties can leverage to mobilize voters. Campaign infrastructure born out of organizational networks helps parties reduce political costs while ensuring stable support from the community. In addition, candidates' long experience in organizations improves their political skills and expands the networks that can be mobilized in elections (Aruna, 2018; Harahap et al., 2023). Therefore, grassroots pathways strengthen the electoral competitiveness of parties by producing candidates who combine organizational experience, established networks, and strong ties to the community.

Furthermore, grassroots pathways provide a valuable source of political legitimacy for parties. Women candidates from organizational networks can take advantage of regular community activities as low-cost campaign spaces while building closeness with female voters (Aspinall et al., 2021; Mahsun et al., 2021). Support from community figures or local leaders further strengthens their position. This social capital can also substitute for limited financial capital in promoting political participation (Farris & Holman, 2014). In fact, candidates' active involvement in civil society organizations not only broadens their electoral support base but also provides additional legitimacy for parties when nominating women candidates (Ehrhart et al., 2024).

By leveraging informal linkages between parties and women's organizations, internal party support in candidate selection and nomination, and candidates' social and political capital, grassroots pathways provide parties with a strategic advantage in increasing women's representation. Grassroots pathways strengthen political recruitment, party support ensures access to resources, and candidates' social capital provides an effective mobilization engine in a clientelistic open-list proportional representation (PR) electoral system. In conditions where economic capital is limited, the combination of these factors provides a competitive advantage for political parties to increase women's chances of representation in parliament. Therefore, as part of this analysis, my hypothesis highlights grassroots pathways as a factor contributing to women's representation in parliament, as shown in Figure 2.1. I argue that:

“Political parties that leverage grassroots pathways are more likely to achieve higher rates of women’s representation than those that do not”.



Source: Author's production

Figure 2. 1 Hypothesis

I propose that the effectiveness of grassroots pathways in increasing women's representation is determined by three interrelated indicators. 1) Strong linkages between parties and women's organizations provide a supply of potential women candidates who have organizational experience and legitimacy from a broad mass base. 2) Candidate selection and support from parties reflect the party's commitment to providing access to candidacy, placing women in strategic positions, and providing resource support from the beginning of the candidacy process. 3). Social and political capital of the candidates enables organizational experience and party support to be converted into electoral victory.

In contrast, the non-grassroots (elite) pathway is characterized by weak party linkages with women's organizations, candidate selection based on popularity, family relations (political dynasties), or individuals with financial capital, as well as a lack of social legitimacy and organizational experience. Under these conditions, a supply of candidates from the grassroots is not formed, while party support is inconsistent. As a result, even if women are able to run as candidates, they find it difficult to convert their candidacy into victory because they lack adequate social and political capital.

The three factors in the grassroots pathway influence each other, so that high women's representation can only be achieved if all three are present simultaneously. For example, a party may have links with women's organizations and provide access to candidacy, but if the candidates do not have the necessary qualities, the party's supply and support will not result in victory. Conversely, women candidates may have legitimacy and quality, but without strong linkages and party support, their chances of being elected remain low. Thus, only when strong party-organization linkages, candidate selection and party support, and social and political capital of the candidates work simultaneously can the grassroots pathway truly result in high women's representation.

Table 2.1. Indicators for Grassroots Pathway

No.	Indicator	Utilizing Grassroots Pathways	Not Utilizing Grassroots Pathways (Elites)
1.	Party and Organization Linkage	Strong linkage between parties and women's organizations; organizations support women's political participation; strategic support from women's organizations in candidacy.	Weak linkage between parties and women's organizations; organizations oriented towards women's participation in social and public fields; no systematic support in candidacy.
2.	Candidate Selection and Support	Inclusive recruitment access for grassroots women; women nominated in strategic positions and electoral districts; parties provide financial support from the beginning of the candidacy process.	Recruitment of elite women based on popularity, dynastic ties, or financial capital; nominated in strategic positions and electoral districts primarily due to these factors; parties provide financial support late or only to those considered most likely to win.
3.	Social and Political Capital of the Candidates	Organizational experience builds political skills; organized social networks become capital for reducing political costs and strengthening voter support, leading to electoral victories.	Limited organizational experience; weak social networks resulting in high political costs and unstable voter support, lower chances of winning.

Source: Author's production

2.3.1 Party and Organization Linkage

Party and organization linkage is an informal, ideological, and functional relationship between political parties and community organisations, particularly religious women's organisations. Strong linkages can be effective pathway for transferring political resources, social capital, and legitimacy from organisations to parties (La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998). These relationships can arise from historical affiliations or be formed through ongoing, mutually beneficial interactions (Caul, 1999; Goyal, 2024). In this study, linkages are understood not merely as symbolic proximity but as real connections that facilitate women members of organisations entering the electoral arena.

The orientation of organisations towards women's political participation is the main foundation of effective linkages. This orientation can be seen in the vision, mission and views of organisations that place women's public roles as an important part of the organisation's objectives. This support is not only stated formally, but also manifested through internal policies, behavioural guidelines, and consistent practices, such as encouraging members to engage in the political process or providing moral support when they run for office. A strong value orientation towards gender equality provides internal legitimacy for women to participate in politics while strengthening their position in relation to the party (Mikołajczak et al., 2022).

The organisational capacity to provide political education is an important condition for linkages to function optimally. This political education includes tiered cadre development, leadership training, and public issue advocacy that enhance the knowledge, skills, and political awareness of women members. With these skills, members are better prepared to understand political processes, design campaign strategies, and develop relevant policy agendas (Bellani & Hidalgo-Hidalgo, 2025). Structured education prepares women cadres to compete on an equal footing in the nomination process so that they have substantive capacity, rather than merely fulfilling quotas.

The direct involvement of organisations in mass mobilisation serves as a tangible link between the support base and the electoral arena. This mobilisation utilises member networks, community relations, and organisational structures down

to the grassroots level (Mahsun et al., 2021). Support usually takes the form of campaign activities, mentoring candidates when they meet voters, and coordinating volunteers in the field. Active participation in campaigning expands the reach of candidates' messages and strengthens their voter base, while also signalling the organisation's political strength to the party, thereby increasing the chances of women candidates securing competitive positions.

Maintained relationships between organisations and parties are informal mechanism that can transform support into real political opportunities. These relationships include strategic communication, coordination in nominations, and mutual support agreements. When these relationships are maintained, organisations can propose women cadres to run, while parties can be assured that these candidates bring a strong support base (Goyal, 2024; Perdana, 2017). These connections also allow for joint strategy adjustments, both ahead of elections and in building the public image of women candidates.

Value orientation, political education, mass mobilisation, and relations with parties work together to shape an organisational culture that is proactive in politics and facilitates the flow of candidates from the grassroots to the electoral arena. If one of these elements is weak—for example, the organisation's orientation is neutral on gender issues or relations with parties are sporadic—then the potential for mobilisation is reduced and linkages lose their driving force. Conversely, if all four elements are present and reinforce each other, linkages can be an effective pathway to substantially increase women's representation.

Weak linkages occur when one or more of these prerequisites are not met. For example, organisations are neutral towards women's political participation, do not have a political cadre agenda, or have sporadic relations with parties without formal support mechanisms (Mikołajczak et al., 2022). In these conditions, the social capital of organisations is difficult to convert into access to nominations, so their contribution to women's representation is very limited. Understanding the varying strength of linkages is important to explain whether grassroots pathways can be formed or are broken.

2.3.2 Candidate Selection and Support

Candidate selection and support refers to internal party processes for selecting women candidates and the support provided to maximize women's chances of being elected. In theory, candidate selection is one of the core functions of political parties, determining who has access to public office (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995). Party support includes resource assistance, strategic placement, and capacity building for candidates. In the context of women's representation, this mechanism determines the extent to which parties are willing to accommodate women candidates, especially those from grassroots bases linked to organisations (Currie-Wood & Pruysers, 2025).

A party's positive response to strong linkages is reflected in concrete approaches to facilitate women candidates' access and success. Open recruitment access is an early sign of a party's recognition of their strategic value. This access is not only an opportunity to register, but also involves a transparent, structured, and gender-bias-free selection process (Fortin-Rittberger & Rittberger, 2015). In practice, this can take the form of direct invitations to high-achieving women cadres in affiliated organisations, acceptance of recommendations from organisation leaders, or the opening of internal registration announced to the entire party network. Without such access, women candidates from the organisational base often lose out to candidates who have personal connections with party elites or significant financial capital.

The role of internal women's wings is also important in strengthening support for women candidates. These wings serve as a link between party policies at the centre and the needs of candidates on the ground, as well as functioning as centres for further cadre development. Through training, campaign simulations and discussion forums, women's wings can improve political communication skills, team management and winning strategies. Mentorship programmes run by senior members help candidates build constituent networks, prepare campaign messages, and address political challenges (Purcell & Nagao, 2024). This support not only equips candidates with technical skills but also boosts their confidence in a political arena that is often dominated by men.

The placement of women candidates in strategic positions and constituencies is a form of direct support that greatly influences their chances of being elected. High numbers or constituencies with strong party bases provide significant electoral advantages (Jankowski, 2016; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009a; Verge & Wiesehomeier, 2019). Such placements show that parties not only provide opportunities for nomination, but also allocate political capital to support the victory of women candidates. This strategic decision can strengthen the party's image as an institution committed to gender representation and encourage women's participation in elections.

Resource support, including early campaign funding, complements this mechanism as a fourth element. Many women candidates, especially those from grassroots bases, face financial constraints that can be a serious obstacle in the campaign process. When parties provide funding, logistical assistance, or access to donor networks, these barriers can be significantly reduced. Timely and adequate resource support enables women candidates to compete effectively with other candidates who have greater capital (Currie-Wood & Pruysers, 2025; Fraga & Hassell, 2021). In addition, this support signals the party's commitment to the success of its women candidates, which can increase public trust and volunteer motivation. Without adequate support, even candidates with strong mass bases often fail to maximise their electoral potential.

Conversely, weak candidate selection and support occur when recruitment access is closed or only symbolic, the role of women's wings is minimal or inactive, women candidates are placed in uncompetitive positions, and resource support is very limited or provided late. In these conditions, even if organisational linkages are strong, the available social capital is difficult to convert into electoral victory. The interaction between the strength of linkages and effective party responses is a determining factor in whether grassroots pathways actually result in substantial representation of women or end up as symbolic representation.

2.3.3 Social and Political Capital of Candidates

Following the discussion on the linkage between parties and organizations and the support provided during the nomination process, the next mechanism that plays an important role is the social and political capital of candidates. This mechanism explains that organizational experience and structural support will only result in victory if candidates have personal capacity and social-political networks that can be activated (Bayo, 2021; Mahsun et al., 2021; E. S. Prihatini, 2019a). In other words, social and political capital is the bridge that connects resources with electoral outcomes.

The main strength of social and political capital lies in the political skills possessed by candidates. These skills include the ability to speak in public, lead, manage teams, and fight for issues that are important to the community. These skills are usually formed through long experience in social organizations or communities, where candidates are familiar with interacting with the public and negotiating within formal structures (Choi, 2019). Women with political skills are better able to take advantage of opportunities to run for office, build public trust, and not be entirely dependent on money-based campaigns (Mahsun et al., 2021). Thus, political skills make candidates not merely quota fillers, but political actors who are worthy of competing.

In addition to skills, social networks also play an important role in building support. Organized networks enable candidates to reach a wider range of voters through a multi-layered structure that extends to the grassroots level (Woliver & Boiter-Jolley, 2010). These networks function as political infrastructure that facilitates the distribution of campaign information, organizes meetings, and recruits volunteers. Moreover, strong networks function as “trust networks” that provide moral legitimacy, especially in communities with religious or cultural ties (Pardo, 1990). Thus, social networks are not only a means of mobilization but also a source of legitimacy that makes campaigns more effective and political costs lower.

The utilization of networks can be seen in the way candidates use organizational structures to support their campaigns. Routine activities such as social gatherings, religious recitations, or community service programs can become

spaces for political socialization with minimal costs. Organization members often become volunteer campaign teams that help disseminate information, mobilize votes, and provide logistical support. In addition, organizational networks can also be used to target women voters to raise support for the electability of women candidates (homo social capital) (Aspinall et al., 2021). This form of collective support reduces campaign costs while generating a more loyal electoral base than support obtained through transactional means. In other words, social capital can replace the role of financial capital in electoral competition.

Conversely, candidates who lack political skills and social networks will have difficulty turning their candidacy into victory. They tend to rely on money or proximity to elites, which often results in fragile and easily shifting support (Birbir et al., 2025; Jankowski, 2016; Luhiste, 2015; Niven, 1998; Van Dijk, 2023). In open-list, proportional representative (PR) systems where competition is intense, such strategies are rarely sufficient to build sustainable support. This suggests that without social and political capital, women's chances of being elected are much smaller, even if they are nominated through quotas or placed in strategic positions.

Therefore, social and political capital are mechanisms that explain how involvement in organizations, political skills, and structured social networks can be converted into electoral victories. These mechanisms confirm that the success of women's representation is not only determined by quota rules or party support, but also by the capacity of candidates to convert their social-political capital into real electoral power. Candidates with this capital are able to face high costs, structural bias, and internal party competition, while strengthening the sustainability of women's representation.

2.4 Causal Graph of Hypothesis

I draw a different causal mechanism based on the hypothesis that PKB utilizes grassroots pathways, which results in higher representation of women in the DPR RI compared to PAN in the 2024 general election. The causality graph in Figure 2.2 shows that strong linkages between political parties and NU women's organizations such as Fatayat, Muslimat, and islamic boarding school networks (*pesantren*) provide a supply of women candidates with organizational experience

and social legitimacy from the mass base. The party responds to this supply through an inclusive recruitment process, placing candidates in strategic positions, and providing resource support from the beginning of the candidacy. With this combination, women candidates have the capacity to convert their organizational experience and party support into social-political capital that can be mobilized in electoral competition. This flow contributed to the high rate of women's representation in the PKB, which reached 23.5 % in the 2024 general election.

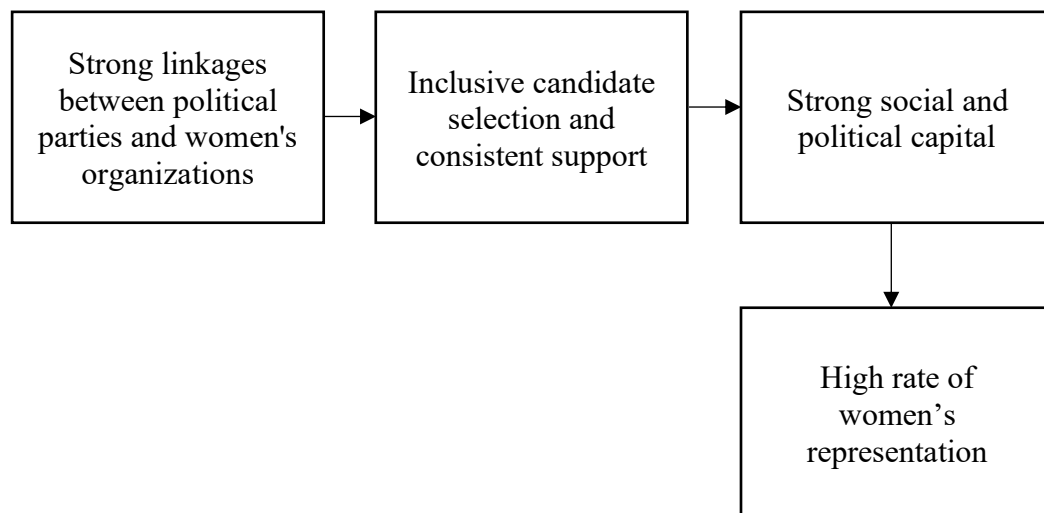


Figure 2. 1. Causality Graph for PKB

Source: Author's production

In contrast, Figure 2.3 shows that PAN did not take a comparable grassroots pathway. The political party's linkage with Muhammadiyah women's organizations, such as Aisyyah and Nasyiatul Aisyyah, is relatively limited, resulting in an insufficient supply of women candidates with a consistent social base and organizational experience. This condition encourages a more elitist selection and nomination process, oriented towards popularity, family ties, or financial capacity, and party support is minimal. Candidates who emerge through this pattern have limitations in building effective social-political capital for electoral mobilization. Therefore, this pattern contributes to the lower rate of women's representation in PAN, which is 16.7 % in the 2024 elections.

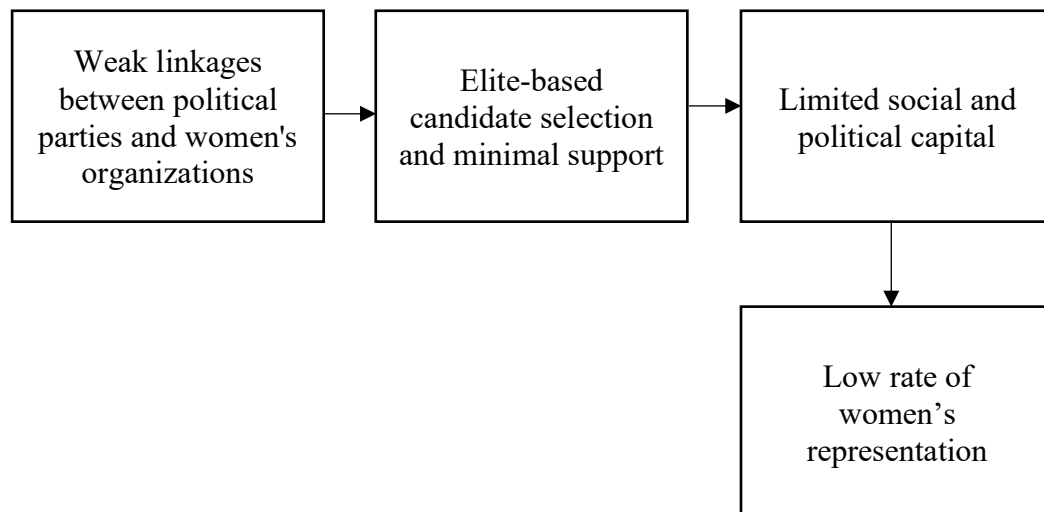


Figure 2. 2. Causality Graph for PAN

Source: Author's production

2.5 Alternative Explanation

What other variables might cause variation in women's representation? The literature on political representation often state that gender quota policies, electoral system design, strategic placement of candidates on the ballot, and party ideology as determining factors. In the Indonesian context, these four variables are indeed theoretically relevant, but their relatively uniform application across parties makes them insufficient to explain significant differences in women's representation levels.

The 30% quota policy for women candidates, which has been in effect since 2004, for example, ensures the presence of women candidates on every candidate list, but does not guarantee their election. Research shows that quotas that are not accompanied by substantive strategies often result in only symbolic representation (Krook & Norris, 2014). Data from five elections show that the proportion of women in the DPR RI has remained below 30%, suggesting that quotas function more as an administrative instrument than a determinant of electoral success.

The design of the open-list proportional representation (PR) electoral system, which allows voters to directly determine the elected candidates, has in practice strengthened internal competition and increased political costs. In a context of high political costs such as Indonesia, candidates without financial capital and

strong social networks often find it difficult to compete (Harahap et al., 2023; Piscopo et al., 2022). This means that the electoral system alone does not sufficiently explain why some parties are more successful than others in promoting women's representation.

Strategic candidate placement is also not always effective. In an open proportional system, voters are not bound by the order of the candidate list, so the effect of candidate number on the likelihood of election is weakened. Empirical evidence even shows that parties that place women candidates in the same early positions can produce significant variations in representation, depending on other factors such as the strength of the candidates' mass base and political resources (Aspinall et al., 2021; Goyal, 2024; Mahsun et al., 2021; Perdana, 2017). This confirms that the order of candidates on the list is not the sole determinant of electoral success, and in a clientelistic political context, candidates' success is more determined by their capacity to build direct support on the ground.

Meanwhile, party ideologies in Indonesia are relatively moderate. Almost all major parties formally declare their commitment to gender equality (E. S. Prihatini, 2020). However, these commitments are not always followed by consistent concrete approaches in the field, especially in a political system that is still rife with patronage and clientelism (Aspinall et al., 2021; Perdana, 2017). As a result, ideology alone cannot explain the differences in women's representation between parties.

Thus, although quotas, electoral systems, strategic numbers, and party ideology are theoretically relevant factors, the homogeneity of their implementation and their limited effects in the field do not sufficiently explain the variation in women's representation in the DPR RI. These findings indicate the importance of considering non-formal factors, particularly the extent to which parties are able to build and utilise organised socio-political networks at the grassroots level (grassroots pathway). This mechanism has the potential to provide a more accurate explanation and will be discussed in the next section.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Method

This study uses a comparative qualitative method with a Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) based on Mill's difference method. This approach is particularly suitable for small-N research, as the selection of comparable cases allows researchers to control various variables and focus analysis on a limited number of factors that may explain different outcomes (Lijphart, 1971). By maintaining most contextual elements constant through the selection of units with similar structural and cultural backgrounds, MSSD enables the isolation of explanatory variables with greater precision. This logic makes this design particularly relevant for systemic-level research, such as analysing political parties operating within the same national framework (Anckar, 2008). This study selected PKB and PAN as comparative cases to reveal the different explanatory factors that contribute to different outcomes in terms of women's representation in the Indonesian House of Representatives.

3.2 Case Selection

Table 3. 1. Similarities and Differences Between PKB and PAN

Similarities	PKB	PAN
Quotas and open list PR system	Apply	Apply
Start of quota achievement (2004)	13.5%	13.5%
Women's strategic list position (2024)	47.5%	41.4%
Party classification	Based on islamic social organization	Based on islamic social organization
Crucial Differences		
Type of Political Pathway (Explanatory Variable)	Grassroots pathway	Elite pathway
Women's Representation (2024)	23.5%	16.7%

Source: Author's production

PKB and PAN were chosen as comparative cases because they share a number of important similarities in the Indonesian political context. First, both parties operate in an open list proportional representation (PR) electoral system with a 30 percent quota for women. Second, since the quota policy came into effect in 2004, both parties recorded the same initial achievement of 13.5 % of seats. Third, both are categorized as parties based on Islamic social organizations, with PKB rooted in the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) cultural tradition and PAN affiliated with Muhammadiyah, thereby sharing common cultural and ideological backgrounds. Fourth, in terms of candidate nominations for 2024, both parties placed women in strategic positions on their legislative candidate lists with relatively similar proportions, namely 47.5 % in PKB and 41.4 % in PAN. These similarities indicate that PKB and PAN operate within almost identical institutional, structural, and cultural frameworks. However, crucial differences emerge in the political paths taken. PKB makes greater use of grassroots pathways through the Fatayat, Muslimat NU, and Islamic boarding school (pesantren) networks, while PAN tends to rely on elite pathways based on the popularity of candidates, political dynasties, and financial capital. These differences in political pathways explain the variation in women's representation, with PKB achieving 23.5 % and PAN only 16.7 % in the 2024 general election.

3.3 Data Collection

The data for this study were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data collection began with observations on 16 May 2025 during the anniversary celebration of the Nasyiatul Aisyiyah Central Leadership at the Muhammadiyah Da'wah Centre in Central Jakarta. These observations provided an overview of the dynamics of women's organisational activities, the orientation of the movement, and how the organisation positions itself in the national political arena.

The next step was in-depth interviews conducted from 27 May to 27 June 2025 with 12 key informants. The informants consisted of PKB and PAN national leaders, leaders of women's wings of the parties, women legislators from both parties elected in the 2024 elections, and leaders of women's organisations at the central level, such as Fatayat NU, Muslimat NU, Aisyiyah, and Nasyiatul Aisyiyah.

The interviews were conducted in three modes: in person in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, via Zoom meetings, and via telephone.

Table 3. 2. List of Informants

No.	Name	Category	Position	Location	Date
1.	Margaret Aliyatul Maimunah	Women's Wing of NU	Chairperson of the Central Board of Fatayat NU (PP Fatayat NU)	Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI). Jl. Teuku Umar No. 10–12, RT.1/RW.1, Gondangdia, Menteng District, Central Jakarta City, Special Capital Region of Jakarta 10350	27 May 2025
2.	Arianti Dina Puspitasari	Women's Wing of Muhammad iyah	Chairperson of the Central Board of Nasyiatul Aisyiyah (PP NA)	Office of the Central Leadership of Nasyiatul Aisyiyah. Jl. KH. Ahmad Dahlan No.103, Notoprajan, Ngampilan, Yogyakarta City, Special Region of Yogyakarta 55262	4 June 2025
3.	Sumarni Susilawati		Chair of Organization, Partnerships, and Public Relations, PP NA		
4.	Hanifah Kasih Surahman		Secretary III, PP NA		
5.	Salmah Orbayinah		Chairperson of the Central Board of Aisyiyah (PP Aisyiyah)	Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta (UMY). Jl. Brawijaya, Geblagan, Tamantirto, Kasihan District, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta 55183	5 June 2025

No.	Name	Category	Position	Location	Date
6.	Latifah Iskandar	ex-MP from PAN	Ex-MP (PAN, 2004–2009); Chair, PP Aisyiyah (2022–2027)	Office of the Central Leadership of Nasyiatul Aisyiyah. Jl. Gandaria 1 No.1, RT.1/RW.8, Kramat Pela, Kec. Kby. Baru, South Jakarta City, 12130	9 June 2025
7.	Ida Fauziah	Member of Parliament (PKB)	MP (PKB), 1999-2004, 2004-2009, 2009-2014, dan 2014-2019	Phone	27 June 2025
8.	Siti Erma Mukaromah	Member of Parliament (PKB)	MP (PKB), 2014–2029 and Chairperson of DPP Perempuan Bangsa and MP (PKB), 2019-2024	Parliament Complex, Jl. Jend. Gatot Subroto, Central Jakarta 10270	19 June 2025
9.	Nihayatul Wafiroh	Women's Wing of PKB and Member of Parliament (PKB)	Chairperson of DPP Perempuan Bangsa and MP (PKB), 2024-2029	Parliament Complex, Jl. Jend. Gatot Subroto, Central Jakarta 10270	24 June 2025
10.	Desy Ratnasari	Member of Parliament (PAN)	MP (PAN), 2014–2029	Zoom Meeting	10 June 2025
11.	Okta Kumala Dewi	Member of Parliament (PAN)	MP (PAN), 2024–2029	Parliament Complex, Jl. Jend. Gatot Subroto, Central Jakarta 10270	23 June 2025
12.	Dewi Coryati	Member of Parliament (PAN)	MP (PAN) (2009-2029)	Phone	23 June 2025

Source: Author's production

The interviews with national party leaders focused on recruitment strategies, mechanisms for placing women legislative candidates, and forms of financial support from the parties. Meanwhile, interviews with women legislators highlighted their personal experiences in the recruitment process, their strategic positions on the candidate list, and financial support from the party. Interviews with women's organisation central leaders focused on the linkage between the organisation and the party, the orientation of the women's movement, and their role in mobilising political resources.

In addition to primary data, I also used secondary data by collecting official documents related to affirmative action policies for women in politics. These documents include Law No. 7 of 2017, KPU Regulation No. 10 of 2023, and data on the results of the 2004–2024 general elections. These documents provide an important legal basis and quantitative data for tracing the development of women's representation, including trends in the candidacy, nomination, and profiles of women candidates in the 2024 elections. Other secondary sources include academic journals, books, NGO reports, media reports, and online publications in Indonesian and English. This data broadens the understanding of the context of women's representation in the Indonesian political system, while enriching the analysis through a process tracing approach within the Most Similar System Design (MSSD) framework to compare the mechanisms of women's representation in the PKB and PAN.

3.4 Data Analysis

This study uses process tracing as a data analysis method to trace the causal mechanism of women's representation in PKB and PAN in the 2024 general election. Process tracing is understood as a systematic investigation of selected diagnostic evidence that is analysed based on research questions and hypotheses (Collier, 2011). This method was chosen to explore the sequence of events and the linkage between variables in detail, enabling the researchers to assess in depth the causal mechanisms that cannot be explained by descriptive statistical analysis alone (Bennett et al., 2019). The main function of process tracing in this study is to compare the causal mechanisms in each case, so that it can be evaluated how

grassroots strategies contribute to differences in the level of women's representation between PKB and PAN. In this study, data analysis was conducted using a Bayesian process tracing approach that emphasises systematic assessment of qualitative evidence to test causal hypotheses. The first stage was to establish initial beliefs (priors) by formulating main hypotheses regarding the role of grassroots pathways in increasing women's representation in the PKB compared to the PAN. Next, the researchers collected causal process observations, namely relevant empirical evidence, such as regulations, election data, and interviews with key actors. In the third stage, the evidence was compared by calculating the likelihood ratio, which assesses whether a finding is more consistent with the main hypothesis or more consistent with the alternative hypothesis. The fourth stage is to update the initial belief into a posterior belief, where the level of confidence in the main hypothesis is strengthened or weakened according to the weight of the available evidence, so that causal inferences can be made more transparently and convincingly (Bennett et al., 2019).

3.5 Validity and Reliability

This study uses two forms of triangulation as a method to improve data validity and reliability. First, triangulation was carried out by comparing information sources from in-depth interviews with party leaders (PKB, PAN), women's party leaders, women legislators elected in 2024, and leaders of Islamic women's organizations (Fatayat NU, Muslimat NU, Aisyiyah, Nasyiatul Aisyiyah). This information was cross-checked with secondary documents, such as Law No. 7 of 2017, PKPU No. 10 of 2023, and data from the 2004–2024 elections, which form the legal and quantitative basis for tracing the development of women's representation, including trends in the candidacy, nomination, and profiles of women candidates in the 2024 general election. In addition, other secondary sources such as academic journals, books, NGO reports, media reports, and online publications in Indonesian and English were also used to broaden the understanding of the context of women's representation in the Indonesian political system. In this way, data consistency can be tested through cross-comparisons of actors and documents (Natow, 2020).

Second, triangulation of methods was applied by combining interviews, field observations—for example, during the Harlah PP Nasyyatul Aisyiyah event on May 16, 2025—and document analysis. This combination of methods allows the same phenomenon to be studied from various perspectives to obtain corroboration, namely the reinforcement of findings through additional evidence from other methods. This approach is important because elite interviews are often biased towards the political interests of the actors, while field observations and document analysis can provide corrections as well as a broader context. Thus, triangulation of methods not only increases data validity but also reduces the potential for distortion of information, strengthens the accuracy of interpretation, and clarifies the perspectives of women elites on the political representation mechanisms under study (Tarrow, 2019).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter analyses field findings to explain variations in women's representation between PKB and PAN in the 2024 elections. Indonesia has two regulations that provide opportunities for women's representation, namely the open list representation (PR) system and a 30 % quota policy for women's representation in parliament. However, despite these two regulations, the level of women's representation in the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI) shows a diverse pattern. Some parties have managed to maintain a positive trend, while others have stagnated or declined. PKB and PAN represent two contrasting patterns in this context. Although both operate within the same institutional, structural, and cultural framework, the final results are significantly different: in the 2024 general election, PKB achieved 23.5%, while PAN only achieved 16.7%. This disparity raises a critical question: what explains the variation in women's representation across political parties in the Indonesian House of Representatives?

To address this question, this chapter tests the hypothesis that grassroots pathways contribute to high women's representation. This causal mechanism operates as an interconnected set of processes. Strong linkages between parties and women's organisations provide a supply of candidates who not only meet administrative requirements but also bring organisational experience and social legitimacy from a broad mass base. This supply only becomes an electoral opportunity when parties respond to it substantively, through inclusive recruitment processes, the placement of candidates in strategic positions, and resource support from the outset of the candidacy. This response then enables grassroots candidates to convert their organisational experience and party support into effective opportunities for victory. In this way, grassroots pathways function as a mechanism that bridges formal rules and electoral outcomes, while reducing the structural barriers that typically hinder women in costly and clientelistic political systems.

This chapter is divided into two main sections reflecting the different strategies of the two parties. The first section discusses women's representation through grassroots pathways in the PKB. In this case, the PKB's strong links with

NU women's organizations such as Fatayat NU, Muslimat NU, and pesantren networks created a strong supply of female candidates with organizational experience and broad social legitimacy. The PKB responded to the strength of these linkages with inclusive recruitment, strategic placement on candidate lists, and early resource support, while the candidates themselves mobilized their networks and political skills to win votes. The second section analyzes women's representation through elite pathways in PAN, where weak organizational linkages limit the number of qualified women candidates. PAN relies more on dynastic figures, professionals, or celebrities, and the party often provides minimal or late support, leaving candidates to rely on personal popularity or financial resources rather than grassroots legitimacy. By comparing PKB and PAN based on three mechanism indicators—party-organization linkages, candidate selection and support, and social and political capital of candidates—this chapter explains why PKB achieved higher women's representation than PAN in the 2024 general election.

4.1 Women's Representation in PKB: Grassroots Pathway

The profiles of elected PKB women MPs for 2024 listed in Table 4.1 show that the majority have affiliations with NU networks (especially Fatayat/Muslimat), which strengthen their community-based mass base. This pattern is evident in Ida Fauziyah (Central Fatayat Leader; former minister and senior politician in the DPR), Siti Mukaromah (Central Fatayat Leader; advisor to Muslimat Banyumas), Anggia Ermarini (former Chairwoman of the Central Fatayat Leadership), and Chusnunia Chalim (Honorary Council of the Fatayat Central Leadership; former Deputy Governor of Lampung), who combine organizational capital with legislative or executive experience, thereby converting social capital into electoral support. The segment of candidates from public figures is relatively small (Iyeth Bustami and Arzeti Bilbina), but they remain integrated into the NU network through honorary positions in the Fatayat Central Leadership. The electoral competitiveness of this group was further strengthened by their placement in strategic numbers in many electoral districts. Analytically, these findings support the grassroots pathway hypothesis. Strong affiliations with NU women's

organizations supplied cadres who already had grassroots networks. Legislative or executive experience increased credibility and mobilization capacity. Placement in strategic positions maximizes visibility in the high-cost open list system. Through the mechanism of grassroots power, the quality of candidates and strategic positions become three interconnected factors that can be converted into electoral advantage.

Table 4. 1. Background of Women's MPs in the Indonesian House of Representatives from PKB in 2024

No.	Name	Candidate List	Parliament Experience	NU Position	Other Backgrounds
1	Ida Fauziyah	1	1999-2004, 2004-2009, 2009-2014, and 2014-2019	PP Fatayat NU (Board, ex-Chair)	Ex- Minister of Employment
2	Neng Eem Marhamah Z. Hiz	1	2014-2024	PP Fatayat NU (Chair V)	ex-Chairman of KORPRI PB PMII
3	Imas Aan Ubudiah	1	2014-2024	PP Fatayat NU (Daily Board, ex-Chairman of Garut Branch)	ex-Director PT Tambang MBS, ex-Commissioner PT Wijaya Karya
4	Siti Mukaromah	1	2014-2024	PP Fatayat NU (Honorary Board, ex-Advocacy Head and ex- Head of Da'wah) and Muslimat NU Banyumas as Board of Advisor	ex-Chair of IPPNU, NU Banyumas Advisor
5	Nihayatul Wafiroh	1	2019-2024	PP Fatayat NU Chair III	Born in Pondok Pesantren Darussalam, Blokagung, Banyuwangi
6	Anna Mu'awanah	1	New	PP Muslimat NU (ex-Secretary, ex-Vice Treasurer)	ex-Regent of Bojonegoro

No.	Name	Candidate List	Parliament Experience	NU Position	Other Backgrounds
7	Anggia Ermarini	1	2019-2024	PP Fatayat NU (Board, ex-Chairperson)	-
8	Chusnunia Chalim	1	2009-2014, 2014-2015 and 2024-2029	PP Fatayat NU (Honorary Board)	Ex- Vice Governor of Lampung & ex-Regent of East Lampung
9	Mahdalena	1	2019-2024 (DPRD of Bima NTB)	-	In-law of Dompu Regent
10	Iyeth Bustami	1	New	PP Fatayat NU (Honorary Board)	Senior Artist
11	Hindun Anisah	2	New	Secretary RMI PBNU	Granddaughter of KH. Ali Maksum, ex-Rahima Secretary, MM KUPI Advisor.
12	Eva Monalisa	2	New	-	PR at Dr. Moestopo University
13	Ratna Juwita Sari	2	2019-2024	PP Fatayat NU (Economy Coordinator) and Muslimat NU Tuban Branch as Vice Secretary	
14	Rina Sa'adah	3	New	Lasiznu PBNU (Vice Chair), Support by Muslimat Ciamis	ex-Commissioner of BRI Agro, Expert at Ministries
15	Arzeti Bilbina Setyawan	3	2019-2024	PP Fatayat NU (Honorary Board, Ex-Economy Coord.)	Senior Artist
16	Anisah Syakur	3	2019-2024 and Ex-DPRD East Java	-	PAW replaces Dr. H. Mohammad Irsyad Yusuf

Source: Compiled from various sources by researchers

4.1.1 Strong Linkages between Political Parties and Women's Organizations

The PKB's linkage with NU women's organizations, particularly Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU has been a source of women candidates with organizational experience and social legitimacy from the mass base, providing a "supply side" that is ready to be drawn into the electoral arena. At the organizational level, Margaret, the Chairperson of the Central Executive Board of Fatayat, describes the organization's extensive institutional capacity: during the era of Ida Fauziyah, Fatayat had approximately 10 million members. During her leadership, the structure was expanded to 37 provinces and 18 Special Branch Chapters (PCI) abroad (Margaret, May 27, 2025). This description shows adequate cadre capacity to supply women candidates, in line with findings that NU women's organizations are arenas for cadre formation that can be transformed into electoral support (Mahsun et al., 2021).

The cultural-historical ties between NU and PKB strengthen the political legitimacy of candidates who come from the NU network. PKB was "born from the womb of NU," and this pattern of relations is also found in other organizations such as GMNI-PDIP or Aisyiyah-PAN (Margaret, May 27, 2025). In this context, affiliation with NU serves a dual function: it provides a recruitment channel and equips women candidates with relevant community legitimacy in voter mobilization, in line with the concept of grassroots pathways that emphasize the role of social networks and cultural legitimacy in shaping opportunities for political access (Choi, 2019).

This cultural legitimacy is not only achieved through individual activism, but also through the symbolic capital of the family. The informant provided an example of a candidate who gained support from NU voters because his parents were NU activists, even though he was not active as a NU activist (Margaret, May 27, 2025). This example shows the mechanism through which community trust can be socially transmitted and subsequently contribute to the acceptance of candidates in the eyes of voters, consistent with literature that places religious networks and community values as sources of political legitimacy in grassroots politics (Fossati, 2020).

This structural connection is also reflected in the overlap between PKB leadership and NU activism. Ida Fauziyah explained that many PKB officials are also NU activists, so the line between the two is often blurred; as a result, women NU cadres have relatively clearer access to formal politics, although not all women PKB legislators have a NU background (Ida Fauziyah, June 27, 2025). This pattern shows a “natural flow” of candidates from the NU base to the PKB, mediated by norms, networks, and organizational experience, in line with findings on the hybridity of religious-political identities that can broaden the legitimacy of women candidates in the public sphere (Rinaldo, 2013).

The availability of supply is also sustainable because it is supported by a tiered regeneration mechanism in Fatayat. The series of leadership from the period of Ida Fauziyah, continued by Anggi, to the current period shows continuous organizational expansion (Margaret, May 27, 2025). This regeneration indicates that the supply of women candidates is not only large in terms of quantity but also well prepared in terms of organization, in line with findings that Islamic women's organizations develop cadres through training, advocacy experience, and social networks relevant to electoral competition (Hurriyah & Wildianti, 2020).

In recent developments, the intensity of institutional support from PBNU for PKB shows a dynamic that needs to be noted. During the leadership of Kyai Said, the PBNU–PKB linkage was very close, so that candidates from the Fatayat network received strong institutional support. After the 2021 Congress in Lampung, a new policy requires mass organization administrators to be inactive when running for office, which in practice makes the space for support more relaxed (Margaret, May 27, 2025). This change does not negate the existence of supply, but it does affect the conversion of supply into electability, in line with the supply–demand framework that emphasizes the need for organizational–party actors to commit to transforming the availability of candidates into actual representation (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995).

The findings on “queues” and seniority mentioned by the interviewee also provide context that despite the availability of candidate supply, internal selection and preference for experience can influence the chances of new candidates to immediately obtain strategic “positioning” (Margaret, May 27, 2025). In the context

of grassroots pathways, this explains why a strong supply does not necessarily result in an increase in the number of seats, as there are institutional filters at the conversion stage that go beyond mere party-organization relations; therefore, linkages must be read as a prerequisite for the provision of candidates, not the sole determinant of electability.

Overall, field evidence shows that the mass base of Fatayat/Muslimat NU provides a supply of women candidates, the cultural ties between NU and PKB provide socio-political legitimacy, overlapping cadres facilitate the natural flow of candidates, and tiered regeneration ensures continuity of supply; meanwhile, the dynamics of PBNU support mainly influence the conversion process downstream, not the availability of candidates upstream. This pattern is consistent with the grassroots literature, which places organization-party relations as an important mechanism for providing socially legitimate women candidates in a political context characterized by network-based mobilization (Choi, 2019; Perdana, 2017).

The orientation of NU women's organizations, especially Fatayat, which is progressive in its view of women's roles, has strengthened their connection with the PKB. The chairperson of PP Fatayat, Margaret Aliyatul Maimunah, emphasized that Fatayat's struggle is based on Islamic values as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which provides equal opportunities for men and women to contribute to development. Women's participation in public spaces—including politics—is seen as the actualization of religious values, so the organization encourages its members to take part in decision-making processes without denying their domestic choices. This principle positions Fatayat as a forum for preparing women cadres for various public fields, including electoral contests (Margaret, May 27, 2025). This understanding aligns with historical-sociological findings that Fatayat/Muslimat have championed social transformation based on an equality perspective—such as the formulation of *al-mar'ah fi al-Islam*, which affirms the recognition of equal rights within the religious framework, and the adoption of gender analysis since the 1990s (Hamidah, 2016).

In addition to the normative dimension, this progressive orientation is manifested in the cadre development practice that positions gender equality as the basis of organizational activities. Margaret emphasized that according to Fatayat's

perspective, Islam does not limit women's freedom of movement, but rather encourages them to play a role according to their capacities. In practice, Fatayat serves as a leadership training ground through workshops, mentoring, and organizational experience; during electoral periods, cadres are mobilized to support fellow members running for office (Margaret, May 27, 2025). This pattern is consistent with the finding that Fatayat cadres frame the argument for equality in an Islamic discourse that combines the influences of Islam and feminism, thereby producing religious legitimacy for women's political participation (pious critical agency) (Rinaldo, 2013).

A structured cadre program strengthens the quality of women candidates. Margaret outlines the existence of Basic/Advanced Cadre Training and leadership training (public speaking, policy reading, gender perspectives) that result in the distribution of cadres to various fields (academic, bureaucratic, business), with some occupying political positions in the legislature and executive branches (Margaret, May 27, 2025). Conceptually, this is in line with the finding that Fatayat places the reinterpretation of Islamic sources (the Qur'an, Sunnah, fiqh) as a strategy for empowerment, accompanied by strengthening the Islamic scientific capacity of cadres; the discourse on women's leadership has also been prominent in organizational forums since the late 1990s.

However, Fatayat does not force all its cadres to pursue a political path. Margaret Aliyatul Maimunah emphasized that the organization “frees” its members, both those who choose a domestic role as housewives and those who want to be active in the public sphere, with the stipulation that every woman is encouraged to continue learning and empowering herself (Margaret, May 27, 2025). This attitude shows that Fatayat's orientation is inclusive of women's diverse choices, thereby maintaining the organization's social legitimacy. For the linkage with the PKB, this condition means that not all cadres are channeled into the electoral arena, but the supply of candidates who emerge has a stronger basis of legitimacy because they are born out of conscious choices and values of equality, in line with the findings of (Rinaldo, 2013) on pious critical agency on the reinterpretation of Islamic teachings that open space for women to participate in various fields, including politics.

Therefore, Fatayat's inclusive gender-religious orientation is a factor that strengthens the organization-party linkage, not only because of its cultural roots, but also because of its ideological commitment and cadre development instruments that prepare women cadres to compete. At the ideological level, Fatayat combines religious values and a perspective of equality; at the practical level, it builds capacity and support networks that are relevant to political competition. This pattern is consistent with the analytical framework that the connections of Islamic women's organizations (Fatayat/Muslimat) provide significant electoral support for women candidates through networks that reach the voter base (Hamidah, 2016)

The connection between PKB and NU women's organizations does not stop at providing a supply of candidates, but is also strengthened by the strategic support provided by Fatayat to its cadres who are running in electoral contests. Margaret Aliyatul Maimunah emphasized that although there is no formal policy in the form of an organizational decision, Fatayat ethically encourages solidarity to support all cadres who are running for office. This support is informal but highly effective, especially when the candidate is a former Fatayat Chairperson such as Ida Fauziyah or Anggia Ermarini, where the organizational network even goes out of its way to support the candidacy through national and international officials (Margaret, May 27, 2025). This demonstrates that the organizational-party linkage is not merely structural but is also manifested in political support practices rooted in organizational loyalty. This finding is consistent with literature emphasizing that in an expensive and clientelistic open-list PR system, the success of women candidates is highly determined by access to social networks, including Islamic women's organizations that can directly reach the voter base (Aspinall et al., 2021; Fossati et al., 2020).

Fatayat's support took various forms, ranging from unpaid volunteers to seek votes, involvement in campaign teams with financial support, use of social media and WhatsApp groups, to direct door-to-door campaigning. Margaret emphasized that organizational structures were also often indirectly involved because local administrators were part of the candidate's team (Margaret, May 27, 2025). This kind of support shows how organizational networks are used as political instruments, in line with findings in the literature that institutional relations between

parties and organizations are a strategic path for converting cultural resources into electoral opportunities, where PKB has historically utilized its closeness to NU as a social base and arena for the political regeneration of women (Hurriyah & Wildianti, 2020; Perdana, 2017).

This support is symbiotic. Margaret explains that organizations gain long-term benefits when their cadres succeed in public office because access to state resources and opportunities to strengthen programs become more open. Conversely, for cadres who advance, Fatayat's support provides a solid social base and moral legitimacy as representatives of NU, which is often more valuable than short-term financial incentives (Margaret, May 27, 2025). This pattern is in line with Rinaldo's (2013) view that Islamic women's organizations combine religious discourse with gender equality values, enabling them to build pious critical agency that facilitates women's participation in the public sphere. Thus, Fatayat's support for its cadres demonstrates a reciprocal linkage: the organization provides an electoral base, while elected candidates strengthen the organization's access and programs.

Therefore, the linkage between PKB and NU women's organizations not only creates a supply of women candidates with social legitimacy but also provides concrete strategic support in the electoral process. Through the mobilization of social networks, organizational norms of solidarity, and mutually beneficial linkages, Fatayat acts as a key enabler of the grassroots pathway for women's representation in PKB. This confirms that women's representation through this pathway does not only depend on the existence of candidates, but also on the strength of institutionalized organizational support in everyday political practice.

4.1.2 Inclusive Candidate Selection and Consistent Support

The PKB's linkage with NU women's organizations, particularly Fatayat and Muslimat, has been key to creating inclusive recruitment access for women. This pathway allows cadres from the grassroots level to enter the political arena, rather than only candidates from the elite. The chairperson of the Central Fatayat emphasized that even though there are party elites who do not fully understand affirmative action or do not prioritize women's issues, the NU structure still

provides space for women cadres to enter the candidacy market. “On the one hand, the party wants to encourage cadres with a clear vision and mission, but if the cadres do not have money, they can be left behind” (Margaret, May 27, 2025). This statement shows that although clientelistic logic still exists, the PKB is relatively more open to grassroots women cadres participating in electoral competition than other parties (Goyal, 2024).

In addition to organizational support, PKB's internal commitment strengthens this inclusive path. Ida Fauziyah, deputy chair of the PKB central executive board, explained that even before the Political Parties Law was enacted, the PKB's statutes had already stipulated a 30% quota for women in leadership positions as a trigger for women's representation (Ida Fauziyah, June 27, 2025). This internal rule signifies the party's willingness to not merely fulfill a quota formality, but to truly prepare space for women's participation. The social environment of NU, which provides women with ample opportunities in public activities, also strengthens this recruitment pathway. This is in line with Prihatini's finding that the success of women's representation is determined more by internal party commitment than by regulation alone (E. S. Prihatini, 2020).

The story of Siti Erma Mukaromah shows how this inclusive access works. Since she was a teenager, she has been active in IPPNU, then continued her cadre training in PMII until she became the chair of the Purwokerto branch, then joined Perempuan PKB (Perempuan Bangsa), Fatayat, and Muslimat NU (Siti Erma Mukaromah, June 19, 2025). This long cadre development pathway shows that PKB truly draws cadres from the grassroots of the organization to become candidates. Erma's motivation to enter politics was born from the momentum of the 30% affirmation: although she did not initially aspire to become a politician, the party's push to meet the women's quota led her to run for office. “Automatically, when looking for candidates, the party will look for women within the structure... even if the motivation is still to fulfill the 30% quota” (Siti Erma Mukaromah, June 19, 2025). This means that the PKB provides real access to organizational cadres, even if they do not have significant capital. This is in line with Krook who emphasizes that quotas can serve as a mechanism to pave the way

for grassroots women, rather than being merely administrative numbers (Krook, 2007).

Ida Fauziyah's experience also underscores the role of inclusive access. From her activism as a NU student in East Java (1996), she connected with PBNU, then joined PKB when the party was founded in 1998. In the 1999 elections, she was elected as the youngest member of the House of Representatives from East Java (Ida Fauziyah, June 27, 2025). This pattern shows how the NU cadre structure automatically became a channel for political recruitment when the PKB was established. Ida explained, "The involvement of NU activists in the PKB is a necessity... Kiyai (religious leaders) want representation from women and young people" (Ida Fauziyah, June 27, 2025). This means that NU's grassroots path created direct political access for women cadres who were previously active in the social sphere. This is in line with Rinaldo's finding that Islamic women's organizations provide religious legitimacy while opening the door for women's participation in the public sphere (Rinaldo, 2013).

Nihayatul Wafiroh provides another example of how PKB recruitment is not limited to NU organizations but is also open to those who come from NU pesantren and NGOs. Despite coming from a pesantren family with a strong social base, she delayed entering politics because she felt she had not yet made a tangible contribution to society. Instead, she built her capacity through international and national NGOs, such as SIDA, ACE, USAID, and Rahima, before finally joining the PKB (Nihayatul Wafiroh, June 26, 2025). This shows that the party not only recruits figures with financial capital, but also provides a path for women with a background in social advocacy. Her motivation stems from reflections on the limitations of NGO work: "All this time, I've been involved in community empowerment... but there are no members of parliament who truly understand the conditions of the people below, so it won't be easy" (Nihayatul Wafiroh, June 26, 2025). She eventually entered politics to bridge the gap between community issues and policy. This aligns with the findings of Jakimow et al. (2023) that inclusive access through grassroots networks enables social activists to translate their advocacy into formal politics (Jakimow et al., 2023).

Thus, the PKB's recruitment mechanism presents a relatively more inclusive model than other parties. Structural links with Fatayat, Muslimat, and Islamic boarding schools enable women cadres from the grassroots to enter the legislative candidate list, either through affirmative action or organizational recommendations. The candidates' motivations show that this pathway is not merely a formality, but truly a gateway for ordinary women to enter the political sphere. Although there are still dilemmas regarding capital and patronage, the evidence from Erma, Ida, and Nihayah shows that PKB has succeeded in creating open political access for grassroots women, not just for elite figures or dynasties. This is consistent with Choi (2018), who emphasizes that grassroots pathways provide opportunities for women to enter the political arena without relying on elite patronage (Choi, 2019; Mahsun et al., 2021).

The PKB organizes the nomination of women candidates inclusively through an open but selective party mechanism, so that recruitment access continues into calculated placement. Ida Fauziyah, Deputy Chair of the PKB Central Executive Board, explained that the Election Victory Institute (LPP) works at every level for recruitment and list determination, with a commitment that “one in three candidates is a woman.” However, positions and electoral districts are determined comprehensively based on electability and local acceptance: “the mechanism is carried out openly... what is certain is that one of the three candidates is a woman... the considerations are all very comprehensive” (Ida Fauziyah, June 27, 2025). This pattern aligns with the classical understanding that candidate selection is a core function of political parties and a gatekeeping arena that determines who gains access to public office (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995), as well as the ideal practice of selection that is transparent and free from gender bias (Fortin-Rittberger & Rittberger, 2015). In the context of opportunities, strategic placement and electoral districts are forms of political support that increase the probability of women candidates being elected, rather than merely fulfilling administrative quotas.

Perempuan Bangsa (PKB wing organization) acts as a liaison machine that proposes names, influences the order of candidates, and maps out the best electoral districts for women cadres. Nihayatul Wafiroh, Chairperson of the DPP Perempuan

Bangsa and member of the DPR RI for the 2024–2029 period, emphasized that women's wings are not only involved, but “asked to propose candidates and propose numbers: many of us have strategic numbers, for example in Mbak Anna Mu'awanah's electoral district, numbers 1, 2, and 3 are women” (Nihayatul Wafiroh, June 26, 2025). This role is consistent with the literature on internal women's wings as a bridge between central policy and the needs of candidates in the field—ranging from mentoring, campaign simulations, to winning strategy design—which directly improves the readiness of women candidates for nomination and bargaining for strategic positions (Purcell, 2023). Electoral literature also emphasizes that placement in advantageous positions and electoral districts provides a clear electoral advantage.

Systematic internal advocacy strengthens women's positions through documented nomination mechanisms. Siti Erma Mukaromah, Chairperson of the DPP Perempuan Bangsa for the 2019–2024 period and member of the DPR RI, explained the practice of “listing female candidates for the DPR RI, submitting them to the party chairperson and the election winning body (LPP). Perempuan Bangsa compiles considerations on why she is proposed as number one in electoral district X,” which is done across electoral districts nationwide (Siti Erma Mukaromah, June 19, 2025). This mechanism shows that women's advocacy in PKB operates institutionally, not merely based on individual patronage. This finding is consistent with studies that emphasize the importance of nomination governance that reduces the dominance of informal elite preferences, while strengthening the legitimacy of candidates through more open party procedures (Wood, 2023).

Religious mass organizations networks are an additional determinant for women's nominations in the PKB. Margaret, Chairperson of PP Fatayat NU, emphasized that cadres who have been active in Fatayat and PKB for a long time are more likely to be trusted for competitive positions. “When active in Fatayat and also active in PKB... not newcomers... it is very likely that PKB will pay attention... if they are new... they are helped but limited, unless PKB takes a stand” (Margaret, May 27, 2025). This shows that long-term cadre development in NU organizations serves as a filter of legitimacy, while newcomers still have to

prove their loyalty and capacity. This finding affirms the view that religious social networks strengthen the bargaining power of women candidates, especially those who do not have financial capital or political dynasties.

The nomination process in PKB is relatively free from political dowry practices, although the cost of competition remains high. Siti Erma stated, “To this day, I have never been asked for a dowry; what the leadership sees is what we have done and our dedication throughout the process” (Siti Erma Mukaromah, June 19, 2025). This testimony underscores the existence of a meritocracy based on work records, differing from the clientelism that often dominates nominations in other parties. However, the literature reminds us that the system in general remains vulnerable to elite manipulation and is costly, which often limits women (Kelbel, 2020; Piscopo, 2014; Tromborg, 2021). Thus, the PKB’s experience shows efforts to correct money politics in nominations, although the risk of dependence on elite goodwill remains.

Pro-women leadership at the center is a key factor in accelerating the promotion of candidates to strategic positions. Nihayatul recounted how she was “proposed” directly by the PKB chair to run for the DPR RI and was placed high on the list: “I was proposed by Cak Imin... If Pak Muhaimin had not seen my potential and was not willing to give positions to many women, it would have been impossible for me to be ranked second” (Nihayatul Wafiroh, June 26, 2025). This experience shows the political will at the elite level to push women cadres into competitive positions. The literature on candidate selection emphasizes the importance of signals of support from party leaders to ensure substantive representation of women, while also reminding us that central-regional tensions in gatekeeping nominations must be managed so as not to disadvantage new women.

Structural barriers such as family permission and financial independence continue to narrow the path to nomination, even though the supply of women cadres is quite large. Nihayatul revealed the Perempuan Bangsa (Women of the Nation) “100-point cadre development” program, which involved thousands of women, but many of them were not ready to run because they did not have “permission from their closest relatives” and “financial independence” (Nihayatul Wafiroh, June 26, 2025). She emphasized the importance of a “feminine politics”

ethos that emphasizes community service rather than simply the pursuit of power. The literature confirms that without logistical support, funding, and donor networks from the party, women candidates find it difficult to convert strategic positions into electoral victories.

In the end, even though the open list system made the order of candidates on the ballot irrelevant, the combination of strategic placement, the PKB's electoral base, and support from the women's wing succeeded in transforming inclusive recruitment into winnable nominations for grassroots women. Evidence from the PKB case—ranging from the LPP mechanism, women's advocacy for candidate numbers and electoral districts, to the political will of the central leadership—shows how consistent pro-women strategies can transcend formal quotas. In the context of expensive politics, PKB demonstrates that inclusion at the recruitment stage can be maintained through to the nomination stage through a combination of institutional, social, and political support that reinforce one another.

Financial support in the early stages of candidacy is a crucial factor that enables women cadres from the grassroots to compete in a costly political system. Since the era of Gus Dur, the PKB has displayed a progressive gender perspective by providing opportunities for women to hold important positions, both in the DPR and in the party structure. Ida Fauziyah, Deputy Chair of the PKB Central Executive Board, emphasized that forums such as *Perempuan Bangsa* were established not only as a means of cadre development, but also as a space to accommodate and facilitate the needs of women in political contests (Ida Fauziyah, June 27, 2025). This shows that gender orientation from the outset legitimizes the allocation of support, including material support, so that women candidates are not only present symbolically but also have the capacity to compete. The literature on political finance emphasizes that structural party support is a vital instrument for reducing financial barriers that disproportionately burden women candidates.

The PKB's commitment to early financing can be seen in its mechanism for affirming new candidates, especially women. Ida emphasized that the party “provides assistance especially in new constituencies” and recognizes the need for financial support for women cadres so that they are not eliminated simply because of limited capital (Ida Fauziyah, June 27, 2025). This assistance is a form of

redistribution that expands access for grassroots women to enter the electoral arena, so that the supply of candidates does not stop at the internal selection stage. In line with this, the literature states that financial intervention by parties can reduce systemic bias that often places women candidates in uncompetitive positions due to weak personal resources.

However, the form of support differs for established candidates. Ida admitted that she did not receive direct financial assistance because she already held a political position, but rather that the entire party infrastructure had been mobilized to support her position since 1999. “All of the party infrastructure was mobilized for me... the way the party provided support to me and my other female friends was definitely different” (Ida Fauziyah, June 27, 2025). This pattern demonstrates a differentiation in strategy: new candidates receive material support to get started, while established candidates are supported by the networks and political facilities associated with their positions. This aligns with the view that party financing is contextual and adaptive to candidates’ needs.

The issue of costs remains a serious obstacle for women candidates, especially those from religious organizations and NGOs. Margaret, Chairwoman of PP Fatayat NU, highlighted the reality that “no matter how good you are, if you don’t have money, it depends on the party, whether they are willing to finance you. If the party is not willing to finance you, you will fall” (Margaret, May 27, 2025). This testimony confirms that high campaign costs prevent many potential women activists from running even if they are qualified. This highlights the relevance of the argument that financial capital is the biggest obstacle for women in electoral politics and without party support, grassroots candidates are almost certain to fail to enter the arena of candidacy (Mahsun et al., 2021; Perdana & Hillman, 2020; E. S. Prihatini, 2020).

Candidates also view financial support as a political right that is worth fighting for. Nihayatul Wafiroh, Chairperson of the DPP Perempuan Bangsa (National Women's Party) and member of the DPR RI for the 2024–2029 period, emphasized that she asked her party to cover the full cost of her candidacy. “I have social capital... I have personal capital... but I don't have the financial means. So I ask PKB for this... if Mr. Muhaimin wants to have women members of the DPR,

he must support me and finance me. And I am 100% covered” (Nihayatul Wafiroh, June 26, 2025). This statement shows that social networks and intellectual capacity are not sufficient to legitimize a candidate; financial support from the party is a prerequisite for women to compete on equal terms in a costly electoral system. The literature on gender and political parties supports this view by emphasizing that affirmative resource allocation is the most tangible form of a party’s commitment to equal representation (Piscopo, 2014).

Initial financial support is also temporary. Nihayatul emphasized that full funding is only provided when running for the first time: “I was only funded in 2014. In 2019, I was already a council member, so why fund me? Those who are funded are those who enter first” (Nihayatul Wafiroh, June 26, 2025). This pattern was also confirmed by Siti Erma Mukaromah, Chairperson of the DPP Perempuan Bangsa for the 2019–2024 period, who said that incumbents are expected to finance themselves or even help other cadres. “If they’re still incumbents... they already have more capital than their new friends” (Siti Erma Mukaromah, June 19, 2025). This pattern of financial responsibility rotation shows that initial support is seen as an investment by the party to increase the chances of new candidates winning, while financial sustainability after being elected becomes a personal responsibility.

Overall, field evidence shows that initial financial support from the party plays a major role in transforming access to nomination into opportunities for grassroots women to win. Without this financial intervention, it would be almost impossible for women candidates emerging from Fatayat, Muslimat, or NGOs to survive in high-cost competitions. Initial support enabled candidates to minimize structural inequalities and opened the path to more substantive candidacies. Thus, the PKB’s strategy emphasized that pro-women commitments were not enough to be realized through quotas, but also through the redistribution of material resources that ensured women candidates were truly competitive.

4.1.3 Strong Social and Political Capital of Candidates

PKB builds women candidates who are able to convert their organizational experience and party support into socio-political capital that can be mobilized in the field, so that initial affirmation (e.g., candidate number) does not remain a symbol but is transformed into a basis for mobilization. The source emphasized that PKB women cadres are “prepared to struggle, survive, and become strong women who do not just wait for a helping hand” and that after affirmation, “we must fight to win those seats” (Siti Erma Mukaromah, June 19, 2025). This pattern is consistent with the “grassroots pathway” framework, which places organizational experience, social networks, and ideological commitment as political capital that enables women to enter the electoral arena and convert access into competitiveness, especially in the context of an expensive open list system (Choi, 2019; Doneys et al., 2024; Jakimow et al., 2023).

The NU network functions as a structured mobilization channel from the village to the branch level, enabling campaign messages to spread quickly and be tied to community needs—a prerequisite for converting social capital into electoral support. “The Muslimat, IPPNU, Fatayat, and women farmer community teams” were activated from the outset and the program “adapted to their needs... remained accommodative to their interests,” accompanied by intense fieldwork: socialization, gatherings, and political education for rural women through the Fatayat structure down to the branch level (Siti Erma Mukaromah, June 19, 2025). The link between parties and Islamic women's organizations such as Fatayat/Muslimat proved to provide significant electoral support for women candidates because their networks directly reached the voter base, and this was an instrument for parties to convert cultural resources into electoral opportunities (Fossati, 2020; Mahsun et al., 2021).

The advantage of PKB candidates is further strengthened by the social legitimacy provided by the mass organizations, which voters perceive as trustworthy, while also serving as a quality filter for candidates. Margaret emphasizes that the direction of Fatayat's support ultimately depends on the commitment and personal qualities of the candidate—there are voters who are “PKB-minded,” but many also assess ‘personality’ and performance; this is why the majority of PKB members of the 2024 House of Representatives come from

Fatayat structures that are “not just names” but actively strengthen the organization (Margaret, May 27, 2025). Theoretically, this is in line with findings on religious-critical agency that fosters women's political legitimacy through organizational work and interpretations of religious values that are pro-public involvement, so that the organization-party linkage does not stop at cultural roots but becomes a source of collective trust that can be mobilized (Rinaldo, 2013).

Organizational experience also hones political skills—from activity management, mastery of cross-sectoral issues, to public communication—which increase the chances of winning when converted into campaign strategies. “The difference between activists and non-activists”: civil society organization cadres are accustomed to “managing activities,” serving as moderators/speakers, and are forced to understand broad issues from stunting to terrorism so that their speaking skills and problem-solving abilities are more tested (Margaret, May 27, 2025). Siti Erma concludes, “organizing is part of political practice,” which cultivates sensitivity, trust, and closeness with grassroots voters (Siti Erma Mukaromah, June 19, 2025). The literature in your draft shows that the pathway from grassroots activism to representative politics works through a process of capacity transfer-amplification-expansion-translation, which in turn increases the credibility of candidates in the eyes of voters (Jakimow et al., 2023; Choi, 2018).

The ultimate effect is an effective campaign strategy at a relatively lower cost, as religious-social networks replace some logistical needs and reduce transactional practices. In 2004, with a budget of approximately Rp7.5 million, Siti Erma secured around 14,000 votes thanks to the collective efforts of NU members who helped fund fuel, t-shirt printing, and expenses—while in the subsequent phase, costs increased alongside the need for campaign materials and the scale of the campaign without resorting to “dawn raids” (Siti Erma Mukaromah, June 19, 2025). Nihayatul Wafiroh emphasized a firm stance against “money politics,” replacing it with intensive canvassing: door-to-door teams reached approximately 300,000 households, and for three consecutive terms, she recorded the highest vote count in her constituency “without a single envelope” (Nihayatul Wafiroh, June 26, 2025). These findings respond to the context of Indonesia's expensive open list system, which reinforces clientelism: candidates with grassroots networks and party

support are able to reduce the effective cost per vote and reduce dependence on cash, which disadvantages women (Birbir et al., 2025; Piscopo et al., 2022).

Compared to non-grassroots patterns, the PKB's advantage stems from its institutional linkages with mass organizations, which provide a supply of networked candidates plus structured support from the party—a combination that has been shown to increase the chances of winning. Mechanistically, your draft shows a causal chain: strong linkage → inclusive selection and consistent support → candidates' socio-political capital → higher representation of women; conversely, weak linkage encourages elitist selection, limited candidate capital, and low representation (Causality Graph PKB vs. PAN). In other words, PKB leveraged cultural-institutional relations to overcome the structural barriers of open-list PR (high costs, intra-party competition, informal bias), so that women candidates not only “made the list” but also won by converting social capital into sustained electoral support (Albaugh, 2022; E. S. Prihatini, 2020).

Finally, the strategic consequences are clear: when NU networks are combined with the struggle ethos of cadres and institutional party support, PKB women candidates have three cumulative advantages quick access to relevant voters, proven credibility, and more efficient mobilization costs—which together increase the probability of victory. This is in line with your draft argument that the long-term success of women's representation does not rest solely on institutional reforms, but on the party's capacity to maximize grassroots pathways to recruit experienced women, mobilize broad support, and provide sustainable political resources (Doneys et al., 2024; Schlozman et al., 1994).

4.2 Women's Representation in PAN: Elite Pathway

Table 4. 2. Background of Women's MPs in the Indonesian House of Representatives from PAN in 2024

No.	Name	Candidate List	Parliament Experience	Muhammadiyah Position	Other Backgrounds
1	Athari Ghauthi Ardi	1	2019–2024, 2024–2029	Member	Daughter of Epyardi Asda (Deputy Chairman of the PAN Advisory Council), businessman, politician (member of the DPR RI from 2004-2018) and Ex-Regent of Solok, West Sumatera
2	Dewi Coryati	1	2009–2024	-	Animal Doctor
3	Putri Zulkifli Hasan	1	New	-	Daughter of Zulkifli Hasan
4	Desy Ratnasari	1	2014–2024	PP Muhammadiyah as Expert Council of Cultural Arts Institute	Artist
5	Farah Puteri Nahlia	1	2019–2024	-	Daughter of Commissioner General Muhammad Fadil Imran, senior official in Polri.
6	Okta Kumala Dewi	3	New	-	Medical equipment entrepreneur
7	Andi Yuliani Paris	1	2004-2009, 2014-2019, 2019-2024, 2024-2029	Aisyiyah member	Active in ICMI as Women Empowerment and Child Protection as Coordination Chair
8	Widya Pratiwi	1	New	-	Wife of ex- Maluku Governor, Irjen, Pol (Purn) Drs. Murad Ismail

Source: Compiled from various sources by researchers

In line with the hypothesis that elite pathways contribute to low representation, Table 4.2 shows that PAN supplied more women candidates from political dynasties, popular figures, and professionals rather than from the grassroots pathway of Aisyiyah/Muhammadiyah. This configuration narrows the recruitment pipeline of potential cadres and results in a support base that is more centered on individuals than community networks, making the conversion of preference votes in an open list system less stable and costly. Dependence on name recognition and private resources also increases the entry costs for new women candidates, reducing regeneration and diversification in electoral districts. Even when some are placed at the top of the ballot, the effect is localized and not aggregated nationally due to the absence of systematic cross-regional organizational support. Overall, the dominance of this elite pathway is consistent with the finding that PAN's representation of women is relatively low due to a narrow cadre supply, non-standardized mass mobilization, and internal selection that emphasizes individual brands rather than strengthening women's organizational bases.

4.2.1 Weak Linkage Between Political Party and Women's Organization

PAN's linkage with Muhammadiyah women's organizations (Aisyiyah and Nasyiatul Aisyiyah/NA) is neutral, so it does not function as a channel for party recruitment, despite historical ties in the early phase of the Reformation (Salmah Orbayinah, June 5, 2025). This neutrality is reaffirmed by NA, which allows its members to choose any political party as long as it aligns with Muhammadiyah's values, without institutional preference for PAN (Ariati, June 4, 2025). From an institutional perspective, the relationship between mass organizations and political parties only becomes an effective channel for cadre development if cultural affinity is translated into institutionalized mechanisms of practical support and recruitment procedures (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995). Aisyiyah's choice to maintain autonomy and reduce the pull of practical politics is in line with the ethos of *islah*, which manages conflicting interests through negotiation/mediation strategies so that the organization can survive—which historically has strengthened its independence from co-optation by certain parties (Syamsiyatun, 2020).

The organizational capacity of Aisyiyah is actually very large and reaches down to the grassroots level—with approximately 20-30 million members, 37 regions, 461 districts, around 3,000 branches, and around 10,000 sub-branches—with a command structure and programs that quickly reach the lowest levels (Salmah Orbayinah, June 5, 2025). However, this reach is not utilized as an electoral mobilization machine but rather for charitable educational, health, and social services that form the core of the movement (Salmah Orbayinah, June 5, 2025). Instead of converting social legitimacy into targeted electoral support for PAN, the public service orientation prioritizes the interests of the people/community and the state, often subordinating the agenda of women's electoral affirmation as a secondary strategy. Theoretically, social legitimacy based on service only transforms into electoral power if there is a party strategy that absorbs networks, provides incentives/support, and systematically designs candidate placement (Perdana, 2017).

The Muhammadiyah women's cadre regeneration design is actually sustainable—NA covers young women up to the age of 40 and they are expected to be “captured” by Aisyiyah afterwards—but this regeneration stream is aimed primarily at strengthening public roles through education, health, and young families, rather than being directed towards party candidacy (Ariati, June 4, 2025). Aisyiyah, as a specialized organization, even manages charitable enterprises on par with Muhammadiyah (schools, universities, and hospitals), while NA does not, resulting in the accumulation of cadre experience primarily in the social sector (Ariati, June 4, 2025). At the ideological level, Aisyiyah emphasizes progressive and reciprocal womanhood through contextual interpretation—challenging conservatism—but this agenda is primarily manifested in social/educational practices as a “jihad” for improving daily life, not in orchestrating electoral mobilization for a single party (Syamsiyatun, 2022). This framework explains why the supply of women cadres with capacity does not automatically flow into PAN's candidacy.

The direct consequence of neutrality and non-praxis orientation is the political dispersion of cadres: in the last election, no NA cadres “communicated praxis” to run via PAN, while others took part through PKS, Gerindra, or Partai

Ummat (Ariati, June 4, 2025). Even at the level of representation, successful Aisyiyah women in the DPR could come from other parties such as Golkar, indicating the absence of exclusivity of linkage (Ariati, June 4, 2025). Compared to PKB—which from the outset ordained itself as the “child of NU” so that the Fatayat/Muslimat network was relatively more consolidated—PAN did not reap similar benefits from Muhammadiyah women’s networks because its relations were deliberately kept equal with all parties (Ariati, June 4, 2025). This finding is consistent with party-mass organization studies showing that cultural affiliations bound by functional rules/practices produce a more stable supply of candidates (Choi, 2019; Mahsun et al., 2021; Perdana, 2017).

Neither NA nor Aisyiyah are anti-political and in fact encourage women’s participation in the public sphere, but their support is normative in nature, rather than electoral mobilization directed at PAN (Ariati, June 4, 2025; Salmah Orbayinah, June 5, 2025). NA interprets involvement in parties as part of a “constitutional jihad”, while Aisyiyah considers women’s presence in parliament crucial for women’s and children’s issues, but neither has issued official support for candidates from specific parties (Ariati, June 4, 2025; Salmah Orbayinah, June 5, 2025). In the supply-demand framework of recruitment, normative support without practical tools and party incentives cuts off the supply flow to nominations (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995). Therefore, the potential of women candidates from Muhammadiyah women's networks remains “floating” and is not consolidated into party supply (Schwindt-Bayer, 2009b).

The sociological profile of cadres reduces incentives to enter electoral politics: the majority of regional/local leaders are educators or healthcare workers, so their work habits, service ethos, and calculations of “social rewards” are clearer in education/community work than in the costly and risky electoral competition (Salmah Orbayinah, June 5, 2025; Ariati, June 4, 2025). Even becoming an election organizer is not highly sought after; around 10% interest is already considered an achievement (Ariati, June 4, 2025). Literature shows that social sector professions tend to reduce individual incentives to compete in open-list systems characterized by high costs and intra-party competition (E. S. Prihatini, 2020). As a result, even

though potential supply exists, its conversion into PAN candidacy remains low without structural support (Kittilson, 2011).

In terms of capacity, NA conducts political education and training for members interested in running, but organizational support is selective—“those who are truly ready” mentally, logistically, and with family support will be encouraged—rather than a coordinated mass push toward one party (Hanifah, June 4, 2025; Ariati, June 4, 2025). This approach maintains the health of the organization and its cadres, but from the party's perspective, it does not create a systematic pipeline for PAN (Prihatini, 2019). Without a party commitment in the form of initial costs, mentoring, and strategic placement on the ballot, civil society organization training is difficult to translate into seats (Birbir et al., 2025; Krook, 2007).

Indonesia's structural political barriers reduce cadres' interest in running for office: “hellish constituencies,” money politics, and political costs that prioritize wealth over capacity are determining factors (Ariati, June 4, 2025). In addition, the gender-unfriendly work rhythm of campaign teams—late-night meetings, smoke-filled masculine spaces, and lack of lactation support—encourages many women cadres to withdraw in order to maintain a balance between family and organization (Ariati, June 4, 2025). These findings are consistent with studies showing that masculine political culture and electoral transactions in open proportional systems erode women's opportunities even when quotas are in place (Buehler, 2009; Piscopo et al., 2022). In such a context, parties that do not provide gender barrier mitigation will lose their supply of candidates from mass organization networks (Norris & Inglehart, 2001).

When cadres run for office, Aisyiyah provides informal support: facilitating meetings, sharing strategic issues, and emphasizing that cadres should bring Aisyiyah–Muhammadiyah ideology into the political arena. However, the organization does not issue official letters of support to maintain equal distance from all parties (Salmah Orbayinah, June 5, 2025). The “support without endorsement” pattern maintains the legitimacy of civil society organizations but simultaneously prevents one party—in this case, PAN—from claiming institutional support, thereby keeping political linkages weak (Qibtiyah, 2021).

Organizationally, this choice is rational for the sustainability of civil society organizations, but from a party perspective, it means losing exclusive rights to the network.

History shows episodes of linkage during the 2004 elections when PAN's top leadership pushed for affirmation—such as Latifah Iskandar's strategic placement on the candidate list when the 30% quota was being fought for—but this pattern depended on elite push and party chair discretion, not on institutional channels from Aisyiyah to PAN. (Latifah Iskandar, June 24, 2025). When elite encouragement waned or changed figures, the channel disappeared, indicating PAN's dependence on elite pathways rather than grassroots pathways from women's mass organizations (Dewi, 2022). Analytically, this shows that temporary success without institutionalization does not build regenerative representation (Schwindt-Bayer, 2009a).

Recent dynamics reinforce the dominance of the elite pathway in PAN: the families of the party chairperson and high-cost figures dominate the candidate list, reflecting a preference for financial capital and patronage networks over organizational experience (Salmah Orbayinah, June 5, 2025). When ticket allocation is concentrated on dynasties/popular figures, the party's incentive to invest in building pipelines from Aisyiyah/NA diminishes (Prihatini & Halimatusa'diyah, 2024). This configuration tends to produce personalistic and non-regenerative representation of women, rather than expanding the community-based cadre base of women (Suryani & Azmy, 2023).

When viewed as a whole, the combination of organizational neutrality, a public service orientation that is not directed at practical support, selective support only for cadres who are very well prepared, and a gender-unfriendly campaign environment creates a broken linkage: there is a supply of women candidates from Muhammadiyah women's networks, but they do not flow into PAN due to the absence of institutional conversion mechanisms on the part of the party (Ariati, June 4, 2025; Salmah Orbayinah, June 5, 2025). This vacuum is filled by elite pathways—dynasties, high-cost professionals, and popular figures—which are expensive and unsustainable for the development of women's representation in PAN (Krook, 2011; Kittilson, 2006). In other words, without institutional engineering on

the part of the party to absorb and activate the Aisyiyah–NA network as a cadre pipeline—without violating the neutrality of mass organizations—PAN's access to potential women candidates from Muhammadiyah will remain hindered.

4.2.2 Elite-Based Selection and Minimal Support

The recruitment of women in PAN shows the dominance of the elite pathway, where candidates are selected not because of the results of organisational regeneration but because of personal capital such as popularity, financial status or kinship. The absence of functional linkages with Aisyiyah and Nasyyatul Aisyiyah means that PAN does not have a recruitment mechanism based on Muhammadiyah women's organisations. As a result, the party relies more on individual figures who are considered to have instant electoral value without any qualities. This configuration creates an exclusive recruitment pattern with a narrow base and weakens the chances of women who do not come from the elite to win contests. This finding is consistent with the analysis of Aspinall et al. (2021) that weak party institutionalisation in Indonesia encourages candidate selection based on individual capital rather than organisational networks.

The case of Desy Ratnasari illustrates the celebrity-academic typology, in which political legitimacy is gained through public popularity and educational credentials rather than organisational experience. Desy herself emphasises that she is 'not the type of person who likes to be involved in organisations,' so her organisational involvement is limited to extracurricular activities at school, the arts, and the flag-raising ceremony (Desy Ratnasari, 5 June 2025). With this background, PAN views Desy as a vote getter who can be mobilised to attract votes, especially in an open list system that incentivises parties to recruit widely known public figures. This confirms that the recruitment process is more focused on short-term electoral calculations than on building long-term cadres (Perdana, 2017).

Desy's motivation to enter politics also highlights personal-familial factors. The decision to run was only made after receiving encouragement from her mother to use her higher education for public interest, coupled with factors such as age readiness and stable family conditions (Desy Ratnasari, 5 June 2025). In this context, Desy's recruitment signifies that family influence has replaced the role of

organisations as agents of political socialisation. This means that even though PAN has a women's wing (PUAN), its function as a cadre pipeline has been replaced by relational and domestic mechanisms. This pattern is in line with Albaugh's (2022) argument that women candidates often enter politics because of personal motivations or pressure from their immediate environment when institutional structures do not provide a cadre pipeline.

The second candidate, Okta Kumala Dewi, exemplifies the entrepreneur type who enters politics by bringing financial capital rather than organisational capital. Okta openly states that she has never been active in any organisation since high school until university, and her career has been entirely built in the professional world, leading her to hold a director position and start her own business (Okta Kumala Dewi, 24 June 2025). In the context of high political costs, financial capacity and business networks are key factors making Okta seen as a viable candidate. This aligns with Perdana & Hillman's (2020) analysis that parties in Indonesia often recruit entrepreneurs because their financial capabilities are seen as able to cover the costs of political contests.

Okta's motivation to enter politics also reflects personal rationality and prestige. She admitted that she chose to run for the DPR RI because it was considered more 'attractive' and 'not half-hearted' compared to the DPRD, which was considered less prestigious (Okta Kumala Dewi, 24 June 2025). This motivation shows that women's entry into PAN is more often influenced by personal aspirations than by the agenda of grassroots women's organisations. In the elite pathway framework, it is these individual aspirations that are then combined with financial capacity to open up access to candidacy, making the recruitment process more exclusive and private capital-based (Aspinall et al., 2021).

Unlike Desy and Okta, Dewi Coryati exemplifies the professional-kinship typology, where political entry is gained through family connections. With a background as a veterinarian, her access to PAN was facilitated by her mother, an Aisyiyah activist, who encouraged her to join the DPP PAN and later run as a candidate (Dewi Coryati, 24 June 2025). This case shows that despite connections with Muhammadiyah, the candidacy channel was not institutionally built through Aisyiyah but through family authority. This kinship-based recruitment pattern

reproduces patronage relations in politics, where a candidate's legitimacy is more determined by family access than organisational merit (Albaugh, 2022).

Dewi's motivation also reinforced the dominance of kinship logic. She stated that her candidacy was a form of obedience to her parents' wishes, not an aspiration that grew through women's organisation advocacy (Dewi Coryati, 24 June 2025). This mechanism confirms that when PAN's linkage with Muhammadiyah is weak, family connections are more effective in opening access than cadre regeneration. As a result, the party failed to convert Muhammadiyah's female cadre base into a supply of potential candidates, and instead narrowed the opportunities for women who did not have family access to elite circles (E. Prihatini & Halimatusa'diyah, 2024).

This condition became even more complex when the placement of electoral districts and candidate numbers was candidate-driven, so that candidates' chances were determined by personal capital rather than organisational merit. Desy, for example, chose the Sukabumi constituency to leverage local popularity, while Okta rejected the 'suicidal' constituency that had never been won by PAN. Both emphasized that candidate numbers do not determine victory, as the majority of votes is the primary factor (Desy Ratnasari, 5 June 2025; Okta Kumala Dewi, 24 June 2025). In an open list system, the order of candidates on the list loses its significance, and the determining factors shift to the visibility, financial resources, and personal networks of the candidates (Birnir, 2025).

Furthermore, financial support from the party is minimal and selective, which actually strengthens the dominance of wealthy candidates. Desy explained that party assistance only takes the form of returning 'salary savings' and logistical support ahead of the election, which is primarily directed toward candidates deemed likely to win; Okta confirmed that new support only comes after the party assesses a candidate's electability (Desy Ratnasari, 5 June 2025; Okta Kumala Dewi, 24 June 2025). This kind of support strategy creates a closed circle: only candidates with strong initial capital can finance the upstream phase of their candidacy, while those without capital are excluded from the outset. These findings are consistent with the argument of Aspinall et al. (2021) that parties in Indonesia selectively channel support to candidates who are "electorally safe".

The women's wing of PAN, PUAN, does not function as a cadre machine, but merely as an administrative unit to fulfil quotas. Desy said that PUAN makes it easier to select women to meet the 30% quota, but does not provide training, mentoring or a tiered promotion route (Desy Ratnasari, 5 June 2025). Thus, PUAN does not serve a strategic function in expanding the base for women's cadre development. This reinforces the analysis of Suryani & Azmy (2023) that women's wings in Indonesian political parties tend to play a symbolic role, focusing more on fulfilling quota regulations than on producing competitive women cadres.

When linked together, the candidates' backgrounds, personal motivations, nomination mechanisms, and funding patterns actually reinforce each other in narrowing women's chances of winning in PAN. Candidates recruited are not party cadres but elite figures; their motivations do not stem from organisational advocacy but from family pressure or personal aspirations; constituency allocation and candidate numbers are candidate-driven, giving an advantage to those with financial capital or popularity; while party support only trickles down later, leaving candidates with limited resources at a disadvantage from the start. With this configuration, the chances of PAN women winning are not determined by the capacity of Muhammadiyah's cadre regeneration, but by a combination of financial resources, popularity and patronage.

The analytical conclusion is that elite-based selection and minimal support meant that PAN was only able to meet the women's quota administratively, but failed to open up substantive space for non-elite women cadres to win. Weak links with Muhammadiyah closed off the supply of potential cadres from mass organisations, while the logic of private capital-based recruitment meant that victory was determined by money and visibility. Thus, women's representation in PAN is elitist and narrow, as it is born out of short-term electoral calculations rather than long-term cadre development (Aspinall et al., 2021; Perdana & Hillman, 2020).

4.2.3 Limited Social and Political Capital of Candidates

The findings in this section are derived from interviews with women PAN members of the DPR elected in the 2024 elections. Although they succeeded in winning seats, their experiences show that the elite pathway taken by PAN is not an effective route for expanding women's representation. From 2004 to 2024, the percentage of women representatives in PAN actually continued to decline (see Table 1.1). This means that the victory of women candidates was more of an individual exception than the result of an institutionalised party recruitment pattern.

One of the main problems is the limited social and political capital of women candidates in PAN. Unlike PKB, which provides a grassroots pathway through the NU organisation, PAN does not have a similar organisational base that can bring women into the political arena. Desy Ratnasari, for example, emphasised that she had no “foundation in politics” because she had only worked in the entertainment industry since she was young (interview, 5 June 2025). Therefore, she can only rely on her popularity. However, popularity does not automatically translate into electability. Desy must still build a network of volunteers and engage in direct outreach to the community to transform her popularity into voter trust (interview, 5 June 2025). Literature confirms that candidates who run without an organisational base face higher costs because they have to build legitimacy from scratch, while candidates with established social networks find it easier to reduce campaign costs and strengthen public trust (Mahsun et al., 2021; Pardo, 1990; Woliver & Boiter-Jolley, 2010).

Desy's experience illustrates this. During her first term in the 2014 elections, she formed 550 *Bandera* volunteers through trial and error to gain public trust. She emphasised that campaign costs could be reduced by adopting a community-driven approach, such as building public toilets or repairing roads together with residents (interview, 5 June 2025). Although there were still costs for fuel and food, the community-based approach kept expenses lower. It was only in her second term, when her track record was proven, that Desy's social capital grew stronger, allowing for more cost-effective campaign spending. Literature suggests that trust networks formed through repeated interactions can strengthen voter loyalty while reducing political transaction costs (Woliver, 2010; Mahsun, 2021).

However, not all women candidates in PAN were as lucky as Desy. Okta Kumala Dewi entered politics without any organisational experience. She even had difficulty speaking in public when she first visited her electoral district (interview, 24 June 2025). Lacking social capital, she had to rely on a very expensive personal network. In the Tangerang constituency, with six million voters and 18,000 polling stations, she spent over 20 billion rupiah (interview, 24 June 2025). This case shows that without social network support, candidates are forced to rely on large financial capital. Literature confirms that in an open-list proportional representation system like Indonesia's, high political costs are a major obstacle for women because they have weaker access to financial resources than men (Birbir, 2025; Prihatini, 2021; Aspinall, 2021).

A similar point was emphasised by Dewi Coryati. According to her, logistics is the primary determinant of victory, alongside political skills. She stressed that political costs are indeed necessary for campaigns, though they differ from money politics (interview, 24 June 2025). This experience shows that even senior candidates remain highly dependent on financial support. The literature also confirms that when parties do not provide sufficient financial support, women bear a double burden: they must finance their own campaigns while competing with male candidates who have stronger access to capital (Jankowski, 2016; Niven, 1998, 1998; Van Dijk, 2023).

PAN does provide support in the form of strategic candidate numbers and limited financial assistance. However, in reality, this assistance is far from sufficient to cover campaign costs. Desy admitted to spending between 500 million and 3.5 billion rupiah despite receiving assistance from the party chairman (interview, 5 June 2025). Meanwhile, Okta had to spend tens of billions due to the vastness of her constituency and limited social networks (interview, 24 June 2025). This demonstrates that the elite pathway is only accessible to women with strong financial resources or significant popularity. Literature indicates that without serious party intervention, recruitment through the elite pathway will become increasingly exclusive and narrow opportunities for women (Niven, 1998; Luhiste, 2015; Van Dijk, 2023).

In conclusion, limited social and political capital makes women candidates in PAN highly dependent on personal networks and financial capital. This strategy is expensive, difficult to replicate, and can only be pursued by a handful of elites. In a clientelistic and costly open-list PR system, this condition further reduces women's opportunities, as only those from established circles or popular artists are able to survive. In contrast, PKB offers a grassroots pathway through the NU organisation, which provides social legitimacy, volunteer networks, and collective support bases. This pathway has proven to be more inclusive and reduces political costs, thereby maintaining and even increasing women's representation. This comparison shows that the elite pathway in PAN is ineffective in expanding representation, while the grassroots pathway in PKB provides a more sustainable space for women to enter politics.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

This study confirms that grassroots pathways at the party level are a key factor explaining the variation in women's representation between PKB and PAN in the 2024 elections. Both parties share similar institutional, structural, and cultural frameworks—the implementation of a 30 percent quota, an open list proportional system, initial achievements in women's representation in the 2004 elections, and affiliation with large Islamic social organizations. However, the differences in women's representation outcomes do not stem from identical formal rules, but rather from how each party institutionalizes three components of the grassroots pathway: party–organization linkage, candidate selection and support, and candidates' social-political capital.

These three components work as mutually reinforcing mechanisms to bridge formal rules with electoral opportunities (Choi, 2018; Norris & Lovenduski, 1995). Findings from the PKB show that informal connections with NU networks—particularly Fatayat and Muslimat—as well as pesantren networks provide a pipeline of female candidates with social legitimacy, organizational experience, and access to community mobilization.

This linkage does not stop at symbolic proximity but is translated into substantive selection and support. The party maps cadres early on, provides training and mentorship, channels logistical support, and places candidates in constituencies aligned with their network bases. This mechanism enables social advantages to be converted into electoral advantages. PKB candidates then activate their social-political capital through community volunteer networks, endorsements from prominent NU women, and their reputation for social services. This strategy allows for lower campaign costs in intra-party competitions while increasing the chances of victory (Aspinall et al., 2021; Mahsun et al., 2021; E. S. Prihatini, 2020).

In contrast, PAN did not develop equivalent electoral linkages despite its cultural affiliation with Muhammadiyah. The norms of neutrality of Aisyiyah and Nasyiatul Aisyiyah limited the flow of cadres to the party list, so that a pipeline of

women candidates was not systematically formed. The candidate selection process tended to be elitist and dependent on popularity, political dynasties, or financial capital, while party support was minimal and inconsistent. Candidate placement is often misaligned with their social networks. In this context, candidates face fragmented support bases and high personal campaign burdens; financial capital more often functions as a substitute rather than a lever for social capital. This pattern is consistent with literature highlighting the exclusion of women in high-cost clientelism ecosystems (Cirone et al., 2021; Piscopo et al., 2022).

A comparison of the two cases shows that the three components of the grassroots pathway—linkage, selection and support, and candidate capital—do indeed work conjuncturally. However, substantive candidate selection and support, particularly strategic placement consistent with social network traces, emerge as the most decisive factors. This component functions as an enhancer that transforms social potential into actual electoral probability. PKB successfully closed the gap between social networks and votes with significant mass support, while PAN failed to convert cultural proximity into an effective electoral channel. Therefore, PKB was more successful in increasing women's representation not only because it was more “women-friendly” in normative terms, but because it was able to consistently engineer community pathways to legislative seats (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Rinaldo, 2013).

The implications of these findings are clear: political parties seeking to increase the conversion of female candidates from the list to seats need to emphasize standardization of support—from early recruitment, training, and mentorship, to strategic network-based placement, and logistical and communication support. At the same time, parties need to strengthen functional linkages with women's or religious organizations and facilitate the activation of candidates' social-political capital. Without standardized institutional support, cultural proximity will remain symbolic, while candidates' social capital will be eroded by the high costs of competition in a clientelistic open-list PR system (Krook, 2011; Prihatini, 2021; Aspinall et al., 2021).

5.2 Limitations of Research

This study has several limitations that need to be critically noted. First, the scope of the study, which only compares two political parties, PKB and PAN, although relevant to the Most Similar System Design (MSSD), limits the generalisation of findings to other parties in the Indonesian political system. The differences in strategy and level of representation found are indeed significant, but it cannot yet be confirmed whether similar patterns apply to other parties with different institutional characteristics. Therefore, the findings of this study are more exploratory than generalisable.

Second, this study relies on qualitative data in the form of interviews with key actors, namely female legislators who were successfully elected, party officials, and leaders of women's organisations. Although this data enriches our understanding of the structural and cultural relationships within parties, the use of elite informants has the potential to produce bias, as actors tend to present themselves and their organisations in a positive light. The heavy reliance on subjective narratives also reduces the scope for testing the validity of their claims through more objective comparative data, such as internal party archives or media documentation, which are unfortunately difficult to access.

Third, this study only involved women candidates who successfully won seats in the Indonesian House of Representatives, excluding those who failed. The absence of perspectives from unelected candidates means that the analysis does not fully describe the dynamics of electoral failure, even though their experiences are important for understanding the selectivity of party support, logistical constraints, and weaknesses in recruitment strategies that failed to translate into votes. Thus, the picture presented in this study tends to favour narratives of success, while the obstacles and failures of women in electoral politics have not been adequately explored.

Finally, this study was conducted in the context of the 2024 elections, so the nature of its findings is still contextual. Changes in party leadership, social organisation dynamics, or shifts in electoral regulations in the future may alter the effectiveness of the grassroots and elite pathways. Therefore, further research with a longer time frame and broader case coverage, including regional elections, is

needed to test the consistency of the patterns found and strengthen the validity of their generalisation.

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