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Abstract

This research investigates the political communication channel of the Aceh's woman legislators to the community. After the period of political conflict in Aceh, women participation in the public sphere as a legislator is shown to be increasing in quantity. However, their coverage on the media regarding their performance and activity as Aceh's women's legislators is still lacking. These women representatives have not been received enough recognition within the community. This study aims to reveal the political communication channel of these women's legislator to the constituents. This study was conducted in the Aceh Legislative Body using a descriptive qualitative method. The data were collected through interviews and documentation. The results of the study suggest that the political communication channel utilized by the women's legislators is mostly public communication, group communication channel, and social communication channel. They conducted face to face communication with the constituents when taking their aspiration and explaining the policy and programs that they have conducted, are conducting, and will conduct.

Keywords: Communication channel, Women's politic, Aceh legislators.

Introduction

Since the period of Aceh political conflict ended, which is marked by the signing of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on August 15, 2005, women's participation in politics has been seen as heading into a better direction quantitatively. This is indicated by the increasing number of women legislators elected from each period from 1999-2004 to the period 2019-2024. The data obtained from the secretariat of the Aceh People's Representative Council (DPRA) shows that, in the 1999 - 2004 periods, there were no female legislators elected in the DPRA. However, in the 2004-2009 periods, there were three elected female legislators, four women legislators at the provincial level. In the 2014-2019 periods, there were twelve female legislators, and in the current period, 2019-2024, there were eight women legislators in the provincial legislative body. In terms of quantity, it can be seen that the number of women legislators for this period has decreased compared to the previous period. Various reasons may have occurred from the decline in the number of women legislators in the DPRA during this period. However, the presence of women legislators at the DPRA gives the dynamics into the Acehnese local parliament at the provincial level since they are form different background of political parties, electoral districts, education, and professions. This diversity has become the characteristic of the Aceh parliament.

As members of the parliament, women legislators are required to be able to build good political communication with different parties that are related to them. They must be able to communicate effectively with all existing elements; in parliament, with other legislators, and in the community (constituents, stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, and the media). A good synergy is needed among all stakeholders, such as government, society, the private sector in their respective capacities (Yunus et al., 2019). Communication activities become an important aspect that must be maintained in order for the communication to take place according to the expectations and achieve communication effectiveness (Rustan, 2015).

Various channels of political communication should be utilized in conveying the political messages of these women's legislators, such as mainstream (mass and electronic) and modern (internet) communication media, brochures, billboards, banners. Social groups within society such as alumni associations, youth organizations, Quran recitation groups, wedding party, circumcision ceremony, and other social gathering are also important communication channels. This communication channel should be used properly by women legislators in informing the public about their duties. Communication channels make important contributions to cognitive, affective, and psychomotor changes (Valdiani, 2018).

These political communication channels will be the strength and an advantage for women legislators in disseminating their activities in parliament to the public. The importance of building good communication with various parties will greatly support their activities and performance as legislators. It is understood that it is not easy for women legislators to reach all constituents in their constituencies, so the use of mass media is an appropriate and an easy way to communicate their political messages to the public since it is widely used by the community.

Mass media is a medium of mass communication that acts as a communicator that can influence audiences through messages in the form of information, entertainment, education, and other messages and can be reached by the public (Khatimah, 2018).

Mass media will greatly assist women legislative members to communicate and inform the public about the programs that have been carried out, are being carried out, or will be carried out by the representatives. Many studies of political communication suggest that (political) news will have a big effect on the public. However, it appears that there is still minimal coverage of the

activities and performance of women legislators in the local mass media, thus giving the impression that women legislators are not working and carrying out their duties.

Political communication simply explains the political process from a communication perspective. Political communication is in the communication domain, but at the same time, political communication has bridged two social science disciplines, namely the disciplines of communication and political science (Tabroni, 2014)

Another opinion was conveyed by (Wahyudin, 2011) who stated that political communication is part of the political culture of a society, at the same time political communication establishes, maintains and preserves political culture so that by paying attention to message structures and political communication patterns, the political culture of a society can be analyzed. Wilber A. Chaffee (1975) said that "political communication is the role of communication in the political process" in (Shahreza, 2016).

In his study, political communication does not only discuss matters related to the political power of the state and the government, but it also discusses the activities of the communicator as actors in political activities. Political communication is divided into two dimensions, namely: (1) a political activity: the delivery of political messages by political actors to other parties; (2) scientific activity: political activities in the political system (Rauf Maswardi in Hikmat 2011) .

Political communication as a form of communication used in connecting political thoughts that develop in society aimed at achieving predetermined goals. Political communication as an effort made to influence the making of a political decision, which is carried out through the process of conveying opinions, attitudes, and behavior of individuals, organizations and political power (Putri, 2015).

Political communication is the delivery of messages with political content from a source to the recipient to achieve a common understanding of the meaning (Susanto, 2017). Political communication makes the political system lively and dynamic (Rachmiatie et al., 2013). Political communication can be defined as a process of sending political messages carried out by political actors to achieve certain goals both in the form of verbal and non-verbal symbols. As a political communicator (political actor) female legislators are required to carry out political communication activities effectively in parliament. They are also required to have the ability in building a good political communication with various parties, constituents, NGOs, and the media.

Political channels are the instrument of facilitation to the delivery of political messages to the public. Communication channels are important parts of political communication because they are closely related to political messages. A discussion about politics is also related to who can talk to whom, about what, under what circumstances, and to what extent they can be trusted. Political communicators, whoever and whatever their position are, must be able to go through the communication process by sending messages from formal and non-formal structures towards the targets of various layers of society (Siagian, 2015).

Communication media plays an important role in any kind of political system. A communication media is a tool or channel to gain the legitimacy of the people in carrying out policies and at the same time a tool for political people in conveying political messages.

Knowledge of the role of various political communication channels is important to know so that political actors can use effective communication channels to provide good political knowledge to the community so that the democratic development of a country can be created properly (Gunawan, 2020).

A communication media has become a medium for political actors to convey their political messages. Canggara said that the political communication channel is a medium that makes it easy

for political communicators to convey their messages to the community. Channels used are ranging from interpersonal communication, group communication, organizational structure, mass communication, and most recently the use of new media (such as social media) (Shahreza, 2018). According to Adawiyah et al., (2020) Political communication channel happens in four different types, namely interpersonal communication, group communication, organizational communication, and mass and social communication.

Based on the above reality, this study intends to describe the reality of political communication of female legislators in carrying out their political communication activities as the members of the Aceh People's Representative Council for the period of 2019-2024. This study focuses on the political communication channels used by female legislators in conveying their political messages to their constituents post conflict. Meanwhile, the benefits of this research are expected to provide input to the members of representative or legislators to use all kinds of political communication channels in informing the people the programs and policies that have been decided in the parliament.

A number of literature reviews that focuses on the use of political communication channels by political communicators in carrying out their activities as political actors are also used in the analysis. A study conducted by Gunawan (2020) entitled the Political Communication in The Development of Democracy on Legislative Election of DPR-RI in Bogor City, research using this quantitative approach suggests that mass communication channels (open campaigns and social media), interpersonal communication channels (*blusukan* and volunteers), and organizational communication (religious leaders), are communication channels that have a significant influence on constituents (voters). Meanwhile, mass communication channels (television media, billboards/posters, newspapers) and interpersonal communication (face-to-face dialogue) have no significant effect on voting decisions for constituents.

Research conducted by (Susanto, 2013) states that the use of mass media such as print media, electronic media, and online media is used to spread political messages that can reach a very wide and heterogeneous target audience. Susanto also added that persuasion strategy, political advertising, and rhetoric alone are not sufficient to gain mass support. Hence, the use of interpersonal communication channels, organizational channels such as political parties, interest groups, and mass organizations that have specific goals, are also important to be utilized.

Furthermore, research conducted by (Supriadi, 2017) entitled the Political Communication of DPRD in Enhancing the Legislative Role in Bandung City suggests that the media used in the delivery of political communication at the Bandung City DPRD was carried out in various ways, both directly, and through the mass media that are considered to be able to reach a wider community. The Bandung City DPRD also has official communication media such as the website, Instagram, and Twitter.

Another research conducted by Alfani (2015) states that communication channels are political tools that can be made easier for each individual or group to carry out communication or to convey messages and goals. The political communication channel is divided into three parts. First is interpersonal communication. This includes communication between individuals and other individuals or individuals with their groups. The main channels in interpersonal communication consist of families and friends and environment. Second is organizational communication. This type of communication channel combines the properties contained in mass communication and

interpersonal communication. Organizational communication can consist of political parties, religious institutions, groups, and workgroups, or various other forms of organization. The third is mass communication. Mass communication is communication that can involve individuals with audiences or groups to the masses or audiences. Alfani added that the three channels above have a very big role in delivering communications.

The four articles above describe the political communication channels carried out by political actors in communicating their political messages with their audiences. The difference between the above researches with the current research is that this research is devoted to investigate the political communication channels used by Acehnese female legislators elected to the provincial level in the 2019-2024 periods. Moreover, the Aceh's political dynamics is seen to be more unique compared to any other provinces in Indonesia. The current peaceful condition of the Aceh province allows the female legislators to have many choices of political communication channels that they can be utilized in conveying their political messages.

Methodology

This research was carried out in the Aceh Regional People's Representative Council (DPRA) located at Jln. Tgk. H. M. Daud Beureueh., Banda Aceh, Aceh Province. Qualitative methods are used in this study so that researchers can explore social phenomena. Qualitative research is interpretive research (using interpretation) which involves many methods in examining the research problem. The use of these various methods is often called triangulation, intended for the researcher to obtain a comprehensive (holistic) understanding of the phenomenon being researched. Under the epistemological principle, qualitative researchers usually examine things in their natural environment and try to interpret the phenomena based on the meanings that people give to these things. This research method used a descriptive qualitative approach .

The subjects in this study are people who have the potential, experience, and knowledge of the main problems of this research. Informants are subjects selected based on a purposive technique, with the following models:
1. Informants are actors who are directly involved / know about activities related to this research topic.
2. The selected informant is the person who represents a certain group so that the factors of credibility and competence of the informant are important considerations in making choices.

The informants in this study are female legislators in the DPRA, DPRA leaders, former female legislators, and the community (constituents and the media).

The object of this research is the political communication channel of female legislators at the Aceh People's Representative Council in the 2019-2024 periods. This research focuses on how the political communication channels are used by Acehnese female legislative members in providing political information and messages to the community.

According to Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, activities in qualitative data analysis are carried out interactively and take place continuously until its completion. There are three stages in analyzing data; data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions drawing or data verification (Maulana, 2018).

December 4, 1976 is the start of a prolonged political conflict in Aceh where the Aceh Free Movement fights for Aceh separation from the Republic of Indonesia. The Aceh conflict which lasted for nearly 30 years (1976-2005) has been a trauma for the people of Aceh. The conflict has had a huge impact on the life of the Acehnese people, socially, culturally, economically, and politically. The conflict has put the people of Aceh in a dire condition (Fahrimal, 2018). Women were the main victims who felt oppression and discrimination at that time. This anxiety prevents women from having optimal opportunities to involve themselves in the political field (Rasyidin, 2014)

At the beginning of the signing of the Helsinki MoU in August 15, 2005, Aceh's conditions were still not conducive. The impacts of the conflict were still felt. Women's participation and involvement in politics were still considered as insignificant. However, after this MoU, there were already three female representatives in the Aceh parliament at the provincial level. This has never happened in previous periods. Since that period, the quantity of women has increased, although it is still not balanced with the number of male legislators.

In the 2019-2024 periods, 8 women legislators were elected and the number of elected female legislators has not reached the required quota. (Adeni & Harahap, 2017) said that the quantity and quality of women in the national and regional parliaments were not significant. This means that the number of women who sit in the legislative body is still far from what they aspire to (below the 30 percent quota). The eight women legislators carry out their duties by building political communication with fellow legislators in the parliament because their activities are not only limited to parliament, they also carry out political communication with various elements in society.

In carrying out activities as people's representatives, the use of various political communication media is important for women legislators, because there will be a lot of information that must be shared with the community as constituents so that the use of various communication media must be maximally carried out by them in order for the information and messages will be well received by the society. It is necessary to build good political communication with various channels of communication for female legislators so that the political messages they convey to the public can be received without any obstacles and can reach the community as a whole.

Based on the results of research conducted at the research location, several communication channels became their choice in conveying political messages to the public namely;

a. Mass Media Channel

Based on the findings, the mass media (print and electronic) is the channel used by female legislative members in disseminating information to the public. Women legislators in the DPRA have not maximally used the mass media to communicate the performance they have done, what they are doing, and what they will do to the public, meaning that they use the mass media very minimally in informing political messages. This has made the impression that female legislators avoid the mass media.

The data shows that mass media does not play significant role in informing and exposing what has been done by the female legislators to a wider audience. The initiative does not come from them to specifically invite journalists to cover the activities they are doing. There are various reasons why female legislators do not use mass communication media maximally. The female members of Aceh representatives are not smart in using mass media as a tool to communicate their political messages. As stated by senior journalists in one of the local print media "In my opinion, women legislators are not smart

enough to take advantage of the media, the media is actually dedicated to the public, so public should use it wisely"

Furthermore, Acehnese women activists said that the minimal use of mass media by female legislators was because they were unable to communicate with the media. Even though a number of things have been done by women legislators, the public have not been very well informed about their performance. Public can be informed by utilizing political communication media.

From the interviews conducted with female legislators, female legislator do not take full advantage of the mass media because of the either pessimism about the neutrality of the media regarding the information that will be written later on the media, or worries about the partiality of the media on certain parties. Moreover, some female legislators feel it is not important to inform and convey what has been done to the wider community. They have this belief that exposing good information about them through the media (conventional and modern) can be seen as a form of *riya* (an act of showing off, or pretending to do good actions). They tend to believe that their desire to be involved in the parliament is a kind of worship. Therefore, it can be seen as an act of *riya* if they expose them to the public. Furthermore, the fee that they have to pay is also one of the reasons as to why using the media is less popular amongst these female legislators. There is an impression that the female legislators do not use the mass media as a mean to publish and promote themselves as representatives of the people to their communities. They prefer to interact directly with the community or their constituents in socializing the activities they have carried out, and their ongoing and future programs.

Some female legislators have already used the media, but limited to certain moments in which they specifically invite the media. Some other women legislators do not invite the media, but if media crews want to cover their activities, they are allowed.

Some women legislators are aware of the importance of using mass media for themselves as legislators in conveying their work programs and they also acknowledge the great influence of the media (mainstream and modern), even though, in practice, it is used very minimally. News in the mass media will be able to influence a person's cognition, then, it continues in the realm of affection, and then an action will emerge (Putri Azzahra Anwar, 2019). The influence of mass media can be felt by the public, ranging from cognitive, affective, to conative aspects (Khatimah, 2018).

The findings shows that female legislative members still consider mass media to a "second line" media, meaning that mass media is not the main channel for communicating with the public and their constituents. The use of mass media by female legislators is still very limited. When there is news related to women legislators, it is an initiative from the public relations division of the DPRA. So that the contents of the message conveyed to the public are limited to the activities carried out by the informant as the people's representative in parliament. In fact, the mass media give opportunities for the public to know, understand and have an opinion about the pros and cons of the political system. The role of mass media is inseparable from its ability to reach an unlimited number of audiences (Fauzi, 2018). The media has the power to reach and influence the political masses in large numbers. It is also economic, widespread and simultaneous (Wahid, 2012).

The process of transformation and dissemination of values cannot be separated from the role of the mass media. Therefore, it is very important for female legislators to understand the function of mass media and use the power of mass media to sustain their political steps. The media helps many women legislators to communicate programs that have been carried out, are being carried out and will be carried out by representatives to their constituencies. The mass media is a channel of political communication that is widely used for the interests of articulating the demands and aspirations of a very diverse community (Syobah, 2012).

b. Interpersonal Communication Channel

Interpersonal communication channel is carried out face to face with the community. Interpersonal communication is carried out by utilizing or attending social activities that occur in the community. The informal gathering with the community becomes an opportunity for women legislators to convey their political messages to the communities they visit. Interpersonal communication channels that occur in this social activity, for example at the celebration of marriage, circumcision, *Maulid Nabi* (the birthday of the Prophet), *Akikah*, *Takziah* or other gatherings. These social activities are the means for female legislators to communicate their performance to the public and to absorb information and aspiration from the people in the electoral district.

This social communication channel is a form of establishing good relations with the constituents which will then create the closeness between them. The propinquity theory or proximity theory says that a person relates to another person because of proximity in terms of space and area (Spatial and geographical proximity) (Mardhiah et al., 2020). The visit to social gatherings is also a means for female legislators to build and maintain their self-image in society.

There is a tendency for female legislators to communicate using interpersonal communication patterns or face to face communication with the constituents in their constituency. These unofficial meetings were held privately. Visits or meetings are not only carried out by female legislators themselves, but also represented by their support teams, meaning that the absorption of information from the community is not only limited to communication carried out by female legislators themselves, but also frequently carried out by their support teams in their electoral districts. Face-to-face dialogue is the most effective strategy in creating public sympathy in order to maintain the support from constituents in the electoral district (Purnama, 2019).

According to Wiryanto (2004), interpersonal communication carried out aimed at creating and maintaining meaningful relationships that will establish a good relationship. Interpersonal communication will change a person's attitudes and behavior (Awi, Maria Victoria, Mewengkeng Norma, Golung, 2016). Through interpersonal communication channels carried out by female legislators with the community in their electoral districts, they will be able to create a more memorable relationship. A good relationship will make it easier for the female legislators to convince society and change their attitudes and behavior. Interpersonal communication is considered to be effective in developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships (Arianto, 2015)

Based on the result of this study, interpersonal communication channel give creates trust within the community. Hence the good relationships and support from the community

in their electoral districts. This communication channel allows female legislators to convey political messages to the public more effectively due to the full support given by their constituents. As stated by Devito in Sitompul (2015), an effective interpersonal relationship is a relationship where there is a supportive attitude.

c. Group Communication Channel

The process of political communication between female legislative members and the community is also carried out in groups using public facilities, meaning that the group communication channels carried out are on something that is planned and is more formal in nature. Group meetings that occur between the legislators and the community (constituents) are held during recess and usually take place with a clear schedule and are well-prepared (a predetermined place and a pre-informed audience).

These formal meetings are often held at the *meunasah* (Village Hall), Village Office, Village Meeting Room, District Hall, and other venues and it is not uncommon for a legislator and her support teams to visit the markets in groups to meet their constituents. it is usually not an official visit. This type of communication aims at strengthening and maintaining good relations as well as an effort to listen to the aspirations of the local community. In addition, this group channel serves as a means of disseminating programs or activities that have been carried out by the female legislators and proposing aspirations for the future as well as a form of accountability of legislators to the community in their electoral districts.

The group meeting is a momentum for legislators to convey their activities, their moral accountability and absorb the aspirations of the people in the area. Zuhri (2012) says that working visits to electoral districts aim to absorb and follow up on constituent aspirations and public complaints in order to provide moral and political accountability to constituents in the electoral area as a manifestation of people's representatives in government (Maharani, 2017).

The group communication channel is the main choice of female legislators in interacting with the community. The interaction taking place in a planned group is the choice of the political communication strategy undertaken by female legislators to communicate with the community.

d. Organizational Structure Channel

The next communication channel used by female legislators in communicating with the community is organizational structure. Organizations in the community become the media for political communication after they are elected as people's representatives. They use this communication channel to socialize their activities and programs. Community organizations in their electoral districts become their extensions in conveying the socialization of their program. Teungku (Ulama) is a communication channel that cannot be underestimated in Aceh. The messages conveyed by Tengku will be responded to positively by the community. For the people of Aceh, Teungku's voice is the voice of God. Teungku (Ulama) can carry out their role as religious educators, religious leaders, social servants and some do political roles (Sari, 2016).

The use of modern media (social media) is not an option for women legislators in disseminating program activities and policies that are decided in parliament. In this case,

women legislators can use this media to provide understanding and influence to their constituents. Social media at the mass level is the basis for the voice of political groups, which is used as a tool to find information that can meet positive needs, broad understanding of state life and express hope for a better life (Susanto, 2017). Social media is becoming a digital medium where social reality occured and its users' space-time interacted (Purwaningwulan & Dida, 2019).

The dynamics of political communication in Aceh experience significant changes after the conflict. One of them is the number of elected female legislators. There is space for freedom in using various channels of political communication for the legislators which was probably impossible to take place in Aceh during the conflict. After the signing of peace agreement, condition is conducive, people are free to participate and get involved in politics and to use any communication media to bring them closer to their constituents and convey their various policies and programs in addition to absorbing the aspirations of the community.

Dissemination of information to the public through communication media (mainstream and modern) including the information regarding the performance of DPRA members, uptake of public aspirations (hearings), sharing, meetings both in parliament and with other stakeholders, such as the local government, state-owned enterprises, agencies. Another information conveyed includes policies (*qanun*) through the plenary, the contents of the *qanuns,* the number of qanuns have been made and their socialization and implementation, the benefits of these qanuns for the people of Aceh and the monitoring and evaluating the qanuns that have been made. All information related to this must be conveyed to the people in the Aceh region, so that people know, understand this and in the end the community provides feedback either in the form of appreciation or criticism of the qanun that has been decided and then this feedback will then become input again for board members.

Of the several communication channels that become the findings of this study, the researcher has an idea that the political communication channels of Acehnese women legislators that occur after the conflict are more likely to be interpersonal and group communication that takes place face-to-face, meaning that Aceh is safe after the conflict is almost The past 30 years have made women legislators take advantage of this momentum by meeting face to face with the community more, officially or not in conveying the socialization of their program, the Perda (Qanun). Besides, their satisfaction when they can meet face to face in absorbing the aspirations of the people in their electoral districts is higher compared to using other political communication channels.

CONCLUSION

Aceh peace has had a significant influence on the use of political communication channels for Acehnese women legislators with the community. The main political communication channel which is the choice of women legislative members in disseminating information about the programs they have done, currently and will be doing to the community and in absorbing the aspirations of the community by communicating between individuals and groups by using various means of communication; social and public. Political communication that occurs is more in face to face communication. The

use of media (mainstream and modern) occurs, but is still very limited, as is the case with the Organizational Structure channel.

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