

FIGURE, STRUCTURES, AND SYMBOLS: NUR MUTTAQIN'S WINNING STRATEGY IN THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTION IN CIAMIS REGENCY

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the winning strategy implemented by Nur Muttaqin as a legislative candidate from the Democratic Party in the 2024 election in Ciamis Regency. Using a qualitative approach and data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews, documentation, and digital observation, this study found that the winning strategy is built through two main approaches: internal strategies in the form of party structure consolidation and political education; and external strategies through community aspiration services and locality-based symbolic communication. The findings are reinforced by political mobilization theory (Verba et al., 2020) and contextual political communication (Canel & Voltmer, 2020). The results show that figurative and relational approaches are the main keys to gaining the most votes within the party, with Nur Muttaqin receiving 7,054 valid votes. This research contributes significantly to the understanding of campaign strategies in the context of local politics and open proportional systems.

Keywords: Political Strategy, 2024 Elections, Party Mobilization, Political Communication, Nur Muttaqin, Ciamis.

A. INTRODUCTION

Elections (Pemilu) are the main instrument in the democratic system to determine political representation through legitimate and participatory procedures. In an open proportional system like in Indonesia, elections not only serve as a means to articulate the will of the people, but also open up space for direct competition between candidates within a party. Consequently, winning strategies become crucial and are often determined more by the strength of personal figures than by the institutional strength of the party (Sartori, 2021; Verba et al., 2020). Ciamis Regency, as a semi-urban area with high heterogeneity of voters, exhibits complex local political dynamics. One of the electoral districts with a high level of competition is Electoral District 1, which includes the sub-districts of Ciamis, Cikoneng, Sindangkasih, and Sadananya. This district shows a strong tendency towards a political pattern based on personal relationships, religiosity, and community leadership. In this

context, the candidates' ability to build social networks and manage symbolic communication becomes the key determinant in gaining voters' support.

The Democratic Party, as one of the national parties, experienced a decline in vote acquisition in Ciamis in the last two elections. However, in the 2024 elections, a figure named Nur Muttaqin emerged, a young politician, a senior cadre of the Democratic Party, and a member of the regional parliament for two terms—who managed to garner 7,054 valid votes and ranked highest internally within his party. Interestingly, this occurred when the Democratic Party as a whole was only ranked 6th among parties in the same electoral district. This fact raises the following research question: How do the internal and external strategies implemented by Nur Muttaqin manage to generate the highest personal votes internally within the Democratic Party, despite the party's weak institutional position in District 1 of Ciamis Regency? This research aims to explore personal figure-based political winning strategies in the context of local elections characterized by community and religious-based voters. This approach is important to critique the dominant assumptions in the literature on party strength in open proportional systems. Furthermore, this research also provides theoretical contributions by reflecting on the relevance of political mobilization theory (Verba et al., 2020) and contextual political communication theory (Canel & Voltmer, 2020) in local political campaign practices that involve religious symbolism, social services, and the presence of figures in community public spaces. Academically, the novelty in this study lies in its focus on winning strategies of prominent political figures within the context of weak party institutions. This differs from previous studies that predominantly focused on large logistics-based campaigns, social media, or party structures in metropolitan areas. This study also explicitly distinguishes between academic sources (accredited journals and scholarly books) and popular references, which will be further explained in the methods section and bibliography. With this focus, it is hoped that this research can provide a holistic picture of winning strategies at the local level as well as contribute to strengthening the electoral political literature in Indonesia.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Strategy and Election Campaigns

Political strategy is a series of systematic steps used by political actors to gain public support in the contest for power, including elections. In the context of an open proportional system like in Indonesia, campaign strategies become very personal and figurative, where the approach to voters is not only carried out by the party but also directly by the legislative candidates (Mutawali M, 2024). This demands candidates to be able to build strong relationships with constituents through various forms of political communication and aspirational services.

Political Mobilization Theory

Syafii, H (2024) explains that political mobilization is the process by which individuals or groups are encouraged to participate in political activities, either through organizational structures or personal initiatives. This mobilization includes efforts to build networks, consolidate power, and convey effective political messages to create active public

involvement in the political process. Mobilization is not merely about encouraging people to vote during elections, but also about building long-term political awareness that enables the formation of a loyal and educated voting community. In the context of legislative contests, mobilization becomes a crucial step to strengthen grassroots support, especially in areas with fluctuating participation rates. In this research, internal approaches such as party structure consolidation and political education are tangible forms of political mobilization aimed at strengthening the support base. Consolidation is carried out to strengthen the internal ranks of the party to work in a directed manner, while political education becomes an important instrument to enhance the understanding of cadres and supporters regarding the candidates' vision, mission, and political strategies. Both create a strong synergy to mobilize voters' voices in a structured and sustainable manner.

Contextual Political Communication

Purba (2025) argues that effective political communication must consider the social, cultural, and local contexts in which the message is delivered. In local politics, the use of cultural symbols, local languages, and approaches that align with community values becomes important. The localized symbolic communication carried out by Nur Muttaqin during his campaign reflects the application of contextual political communication that can create an emotional closeness between the candidate and the voters.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a single case study focused on the winning strategy of Nur Muttaqin as a legislative candidate from the Democratic Party in Ciamis Regency in the 2024 elections. The research location is in Electoral District 1 of Ciamis Regency, which includes the districts of Ciamis, Baregbeg, Sadananya, and Cikoneng. The choice of location is based on the fact that this electoral district is the largest vote base achieved by Nur Muttaqin personally. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, documentation, and indirect observation. Interviews were conducted with Nur Muttaqin as the main candidate, two party administrators from the PAC level of the Democratic Party, and one active voter in the electoral district. Documentation was obtained from official documents such as the 2024 vote recapitulation results from the Ciamis District KPU, campaign materials, and media publications. Meanwhile, observations were conducted by tracing political communication activities through social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram owned by the candidate.

The obtained data is analyzed thematically by reducing information based on categories of internal and external strategies. Internal strategies include the consolidation of party structure and strengthening of cadres, while external strategies encompass social-cultural and religious communication approaches used to build closeness with the community. The analysis is conducted inductively by tracing patterns of campaign approaches, the messages conveyed, and the community's response to the candidates' presence. The results of the data analysis are then organized to explain how the figurative and symbolic approach undertaken by Nur Muttaqin managed to garner the most votes internally within the Democratic Party, despite the party not occupying a dominant position nationally. The interpretation process is

carried out repeatedly to ensure that the presented data accurately represents the campaigning practices taking place in the field.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The election victory strategy of Nur Muttaqin in the 2024 election in Ciamis District shows a uniqueness in local political practices. He managed to secure the most votes internally within the Democratic Party (7,054 votes), even though his party overall ranked 6th in seat acquisition. This finding indicates the importance of a figure-based strategy in the face of the party's weak structural power. This discussion is structured based on two major themes of campaign strategy: internal (party structure and cadre consolidation) and external (symbolic communication, social services, and cultural approaches).

However, this success cannot be fully understood without considering the dynamics of other political competitors in the local contest. Nationally, the Democratic Party ranks sixth. However, in electoral district 1 of Ciamis Regency, Nur Muttaqin actually excels personally compared to legislative candidates from major parties such as PDI Perjuangan, PAN, and PKS. Although these parties collectively received higher votes, none of their candidates managed to contribute more than 60% of the party's internal votes, as achieved by Nur Muttaqin. This phenomenon emphasizes the significant role of the candidate's figure and political communication strategies that touch on the social and religious aspects of society.

Findings from interviews with party cadres, community leaders, and local observers indicate that Nur Muttaqin's strategy goes beyond merely distributing religious-themed campaign materials. He is also actively involved in the social life of the community, such as building places of worship, supporting youth activities, and participating in various community forums. This approach reflects the concept of Civic Voluntarism (Verba et al., 2020), which explains that political participation is driven by the availability of resources, psychological involvement, and social recruitment processes that develop organically. A reflective question that needs to be asked is: is Nur Muttaqin's success a representation of the institutional strength of the Democratic Party, or is it rather a manifestation of the dominance of personal figures? The party's dependence on a single figure presents strategic challenges: How to maintain electoral support when the figure no longer runs for office? Thus, Nur Muttaqin's success in winning the majority vote within the party shows that figure-based political strategies, social closeness, and local values are the main determinants in the open proportional system at the local level.

POLITICAL PROFILE OF NUR MUTTAQIN AND THE DEMOCRAT PARTY IN CIAMIS REGENCY

Nur Muttaqin, S.H.I., M.H., is one of the influential senior cadres of the Democratic Party in Ciamis Regency. He has served as a member of the Ciamis Regency DPRD for two terms and in the 2024 elections, he is running again from the Electoral District (Dapil) 1, which includes the sub-districts of Ciamis, Cikoneng, Sindangkasih, and Sadananya. This area has diverse voter characteristics, ranging from urban communities in the city center to agrarian and religious communities in the outskirts of villages. This social complexity

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demands legislative candidates to have a flexible approach and strong social networks. Nur Muttaqin was born and raised in Ciamis Regency, completing his primary education at SDN 2 Sindangrasa Ciamis, then continuing to MTs and MAKAN Darussalam Ciamis, before pursuing higher education at IAIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, as well as completing his master's education at the Graduate School of Universitas Galuh Ciamis. His strong educational background in religion and law shapes his political character based on Islamic values, legal ethics, and community service.

In addition to his academic background, Nur Muttaqin is also known for being active in the professional world as a PERADI advocate and entrepreneur, serving as the CEO of CV. Jaga Baya and the owner of the Tanudinata Group. This demonstrates his capacity as a multidimensional figure possessing competencies in law, economics, and social leadership. The combination of professionalism and closeness to the community makes him a trusted figure among various groups, ranging from business actors, youth, to religious leaders.

In the field of organization, Nur Muttaqin's track record is extensive and consistent. He has served as the Secretary of the Ciamis KNPI (National Youth Committee of Indonesia) from 2012 to 2014, Vice Chairman of the Ciamis Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KADIN) from 2018 to 2023, and is currently the Chairman of the BPC HIPMI (Indonesian Young Entrepreneurs Association) Ciamis for the term 2023 to 2026. In addition, he holds positions as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of KAHMI (Indonesian Muslim Students Action Union) Ciamis, the General Chairman of the Indonesian Community Recreation Sports Committee (KORMI) Ciamis, and the Chairman of the Indonesian Local Poultry Farmers Association (HIMPULI) since 2010 to the present. His role in these organizations is not merely symbolic, but he actively fosters networking among communities, provides training, and mediates the interests of the underprivileged with the government.

In the internal structure of the Democratic Party, Nur Muttaqin serves as the Head of the Election Winning Body (BAPPILU) of the Democratic Party of Ciamis 2022–2027, and as the Secretary of the Democratic Party Faction in the Ciamis District Regional People's Representative Council for the period 2024–2029. This position indicates the party's full trust in his strategic and electoral capacity. Additionally, he is a member of Commission D of the Regional People's Representative Council, which focuses on issues of education, religion, and socio-cultural matters areas closely related to his constituents. Nur Muttaqin's presence as a central figure in various layers of social life indicates that his political strength is built from extensive social capital, established structural networks, and contextual cultural approaches. This is in accordance with the theory of Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (2020) on civic voluntarism, where a person's political engagement is determined not only by the party but also by their personal capacity and the social networks they have built over the years. In local contexts such as Ciamis, where personal relationships and social reputation play a crucial role in voter decision-making, figures like Nur Muttaqin have a very significant electoral value. The dominance of Nur Muttaqin's figure within the party structure and social networks indicates that his electoral strength relies heavily on personal capital rather than the collective solidity of the party. Although this presents an electoral advantage in the short term, the party's dependency on a single charismatic figure can become an obstacle in the process of cadre regeneration and the internal institutionalization of the party. Therefore, a strong profile

like this must be balanced with cadre development strategies so that the sustainability of the party's strength does not solely depend on specific individuals.

Winning Strategy of Nur Muttaqin: Synergy of Political Mobilization and Contextual Communication

The campaign strategy implemented by Nur Muttaqin demonstrates the synergy between the strength of the party structure and a political communication approach tailored to the local context. In the study of political strategy, this approach reflects two main dimensions: (1) the dimension of political mobilization structurally, and (2) the dimension of political communication based on the social and cultural values of the voters.

Internal Strategy: Structural Political Mobilization

In the internal aspect, Nur Muttaqin implements a strategy to consolidate the party's structure starting from DPC (Branch Leadership Council), PAC (Sub-branch Leadership), branches, to the village level. He is also active in mobilizing cadres in political education activities, leadership training, and regular meetings aimed at strengthening the party's structural loyalty. This strategy aligns with the theory of political mobilization developed by Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (2020) within the framework of the Civic Voluntarism Model. This theory states that political participation can be encouraged through three main components: resources (organizational resources), psychological engagement, and active recruitment by party elites. In this context, the internal structure of the Democratic party becomes a resource utilized by Nur Muttaqin to strengthen his political machinery. Through direct approaches such as visits to residents' homes, regular face-to-face meetings, and the involvement of community leaders, this internal strategy not only keeps the party structure active but also builds a strong socio-political network. This grassroots strength is then leveraged as electoral social capital to gain support.

External Strategy: Contextual and Symbolic Political Communication

On the external side, Nur Muttaqin's campaign strategy is very adaptive to the local character of the community. He does not use an elitist or overly ideological political communication approach, but instead employs symbolic communication that is close to people's daily lives. A concrete example is the use of campaign props such as daily prayer calendars, washing soap, Asmaul Husna, and matches, which are functionally useful while also holding religious value and emotional closeness. This strategy is relevant to the contextual political communication theory by Canel and Voltmer (2020), which emphasizes that the success of political communication heavily relies on the context of time, place, culture, and norms prevailing in society. Communication that is not tailored to local conditions tends to fail to resonate with public awareness and affection. By understanding and respecting the local values of the Ciamis community, Nur Muttaqin's campaign is not only accepted but also ingrained in the memory of voters.

In addition, a social-religious activity-based approach such as supporting mosque construction, providing sports equipment for youth groups, and supporting village youth activities is part of tangible action communication. This approach strengthens the candidate's identity as a people's representative who is present, caring, and solution-oriented, not just during the campaign. The table below illustrates the winning strategy used by Nur Muttaqin:

Although the symbolic and relational approaches used have proven effective in reaching voters based on religious and traditional values, this strategy has limitations in targeting rational voters, particularly the younger generation who are more active in digital media. Dependence on face-to-face approaches and physical campaign tools may face challenges in the future as political communication patterns increasingly shift to the digital space, which requires different strategies, such as strengthening digital narratives and consistency in candidates' online branding.

Electability Evaluation Based on Official Election Data

Based on the decision of the Ciamis Regency KPU Number 858 of 2024, Nur Muttaqin received 7,054 valid votes and ranked highest internally within the Democratic Party for Electoral District 1. The total number of valid votes obtained by the Democratic Party in Electoral District 1 was 11,373, which means that more than 62% of the party's votes were personally given to Nur Muttaqin. This figure not only demonstrates internal dominance but also indicates the success of personal strategies in directly attracting voters.

Table 1. Nur Muttaqin's Campaign Strategy for the 2024 Election

Category Strategy	From of Activity	Goal
Internal	Consolidation of DPC, PAC, and party branches	Strengthening the structure and loyalty of cadres
	Consolidation of DPC, PAC, and party branches	Strengthening the structure and loyalty of cadres
	Face-to-face meeting, constituency gathering	Absorbing the aspirations of the community
External	Provision of public facilities (roads, volleyball courts, youth activities)	Answering the real needs of constituents
	Distribution of campaign tools (calendars, soap, matches, asmaul husna)	Functional symbolic communication
	Locally based approach (culture, religion, village community)	Adjusting political messages to the characteristics of the electoral district

Table 1 illustrates that Nur Muttaqin's campaign strategy is divided into two major categories, namely internal and external strategies, which are each carried out synergistically and adaptively to the socio-political characteristics of Ciamis Regency. The internal strategy is implemented through the consolidation of the party structure from the level of DPC to the branches, strengthening communication among cadres, as well as regular face-to-face meetings to maintain the solidity and loyalty of the organization. This indicates that the party machinery is activated not only during the campaign period but is built through a continuous

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approach that fosters a sense of ownership among the cadres. This aligns with the Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba et al., 2020), which states that political participation of cadres will increase if they feel they have channels, psychological support, and a role in the process.

Meanwhile, external strategies are demonstrated through socio-cultural and religious approaches. Nur Muttaqin shares campaign tools that not only serve as political promotion but also hold symbolic and functional value, such as daily prayer calendars, soap, matches, and support for youth activities and public facility development. This strategy represents a symbolic communication approach that integrates politics into the daily lives of the community, rather than just rhetoric. This approach strengthens the social and emotional bonds between candidates and constituents, which in many cases becomes a distinguishing factor in voting decisions. In the context of traditional voters like in Ciamis, down-to-earth and religious forms of communication have proven to be much more effective than media-based approaches or party jargon.

The data in Table 1 shows that the success of the strategy is not solely derived from logistical capabilities, but also from a deep understanding of the sociocultural conditions of the community. The campaigns conducted are contextual—based on the presence of figures, local values, and social proximity. This reinforces the literature that local campaign strategies must adapt to local wisdom and community beliefs, rather than merely following national patterns.

Table 2 Ranking of Votes for Democratic Party Candidates in Electoral District 1 of Ciamis Regency (2024)

No Unit	Political Party / Candidate Name	The Voice of the People	Voting ranking of the candidate
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Democratic Party			
1.	Nur Muttaqin, S.H.I.,M.H	7.054	1
2.	Hendra	1.889	2
3.	Yuyun Indrawati	175	4
4.	Sastuko Adeji	85	7
5.	Agus Firman Hura	0	10
6.	Susan Oviani	52	9
7.	Irfan Somantri	74	8
8.	Adriansyah Al Rasyid	126	5
9.	Anggi Desi Puji Yustiawati,S.Psi	214	3
10.	Jumianto Poetra	106	6

Source: Ciamis district KPU 2024

Table 2 shows the striking dominance of Nur Muttaqin's vote compared to other candidates from the Democratic Party in Electoral District 1, Ciamis Regency. With 7,054 votes, Nur Muttaqin ranks first and contributes more than 62% of the total votes for the

Democrats (11,373 votes). The second candidate, Hendra, only obtained 1,889 votes, while the other eight candidates received far below 250 votes. This disparity reflects that the strength of the party heavily relies on a single figure who has social networks, emotional influence, and a tangible presence in the community. This stark difference emphasizes that the Democratic Party has not successfully distributed electoral power evenly among its candidates. This phenomenon indicates weak cadre development and the absence of equitable political regeneration. If only one figure is capable of significantly raising the party's voice, then the electoral sustainability of the Democrats in the future will face great challenges when that dominant figure no longer runs for office.

Theoretically, this phenomenon supports the personal vote thesis in open proportional systems (Carey & Shugart, 1995), which suggests that in systems where voters can directly choose legislative candidates, individual power will be far more determinant than party brand. This finding shows that voters prioritize who is present, known, and trusted, rather than the ideological affiliation of the party. Therefore, the strength of the figure becomes the primary instrument in winning strategies, especially in the context of community-based local politics and religious values. Thus, Nur Muttaqin's success not only reflects his personal strength but also mirrors the systemic weaknesses in the internal distribution of votes and the long-term planning of the party. If not addressed with regeneration strategies and strengthening of cadres, this electoral success will be individual and temporary.

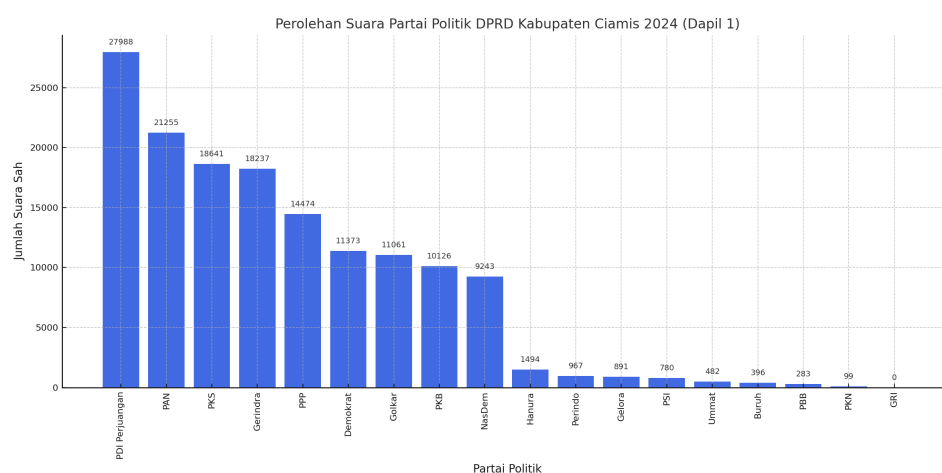


Figure 1 Vote Acquisition of Political Parties in the Ciamis District DPRD 2024 (Electoral District 1) (Source: Ciamis District KPU, Decision No. 858 of 2024)

The distribution of votes for political parties in Electoral District 1 of Ciamis Regency shows that the PDI Perjuangan is in the top position with 27,988 votes, followed by PAN, PKS, Gerindra, and PPP. Meanwhile, the Democratic Party ranks sixth with a total of 11,373 votes. Although it is in a mid-level position, there is an important uniqueness in the dynamics of this party's vote acquisition, namely the dominant contribution from one candidate figure, Nur Muttaqin, who managed to gather 7,054 votes or about 62% of the total Democratic votes in that district. This phenomenon emphasizes that electoral strength in an open proportional system is not solely determined by the structural strength of the party, but is more influenced by the personal strength of the candidates. Voters tend to prefer figures they

know personally, who are active in community social life, and who have a positive track record in their environment. In this case, Nur Muttaqin's success is the result of a campaign approach that not only relies on props or party symbols, but prioritizes emotional connections, social involvement, and local values that are alive within the community of Ciamis. Other parties do show collective strength through a more even distribution of votes among their candidates. However, the absence of a dominant figure among them makes the votes unfocused, thus reducing their effectiveness in competition. In contrast, the Democratic Party exhibits a voting structure that is highly centralized around a single figure, which, while electorally effective in the short term, poses strategic risks in the long run if the party fails to prepare alternative figures for the future. Conceptually, this pattern supports contemporary analysis of voter tendencies in open proportional systems. Recent studies emphasize that voters tend to favor candidates they perceive as close, value-relevant, and socially active compared to candidates who rely solely on party strength (Sartori, 2021; Haryanto, 2022). The figure becomes the main gateway for the political relationship between the public and the legislative institutions, so candidates who can build social connections will find it easier to secure votes.

The dominance of votes obtained by one candidate from a party with a moderate vote count indicates that the strength of a figure can be the main determinant of success in local politics. However, this condition also reveals a weakness: dependence on a single figure has the potential to create internal imbalances and electoral vulnerabilities if not promptly balanced with a structured process of cadre training and regeneration. In this context, the success of the candidate should serve as a gateway to strengthen the party as a whole, not be the sole pillar of political power.

E. CONCLUSION

The political winning strategy implemented by Nur Muttaqin as a legislative candidate from the Democratic Party in the 2024 elections in Ciamis Regency has proven to be effective and contextual. By approaching the combination of the internal strength of the party structure and external local-based political communication, Nur Muttaqin successfully secured the highest number of votes within his party, totaling 7,054 valid votes, or about 62% of the total votes for the Democratic Party in Electoral District 1. The internal strategy was carried out through the consolidation of the DPC, PAC, up to the branch and village levels, as well as political education for party cadres and supporters. This strategy strengthened the party machine on the ground, ensured internal loyalty, and prepared a solid message distribution network for the campaign. Meanwhile, the external strategy was executed using a socially-based public service approach, symbolic religious-themed communication, and intense personal relations with the community. Campaign props such as prayer calendars, soap, and matches are utilized not only as media for socialization but also as a means of cultural approach.

The approach taken is in line with the political mobilization theory by Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (2020), which emphasizes the importance of cadre engagement and organized participation, as well as the contextual political communication theory by Canel and Voltmer

(2020), which explains the importance of adapting political messages to the social and cultural context of society. Moreover, the success of the figure Nur Muttaqin also demonstrates that in an open proportional electoral system, as stated by Sartori (2021), the personal strength of legislative candidates can surpass the influence of party institutions. From these findings, it can be concluded that the key to successful winning strategies lies not just in the extent of resources but also in the candidates' ability to blend party structure with culturally and emotionally relevant approaches that resonate with the character of the society. Strategies like this not only enhance electoral opportunities but also strengthen the legitimacy of political representation at the local level. Therefore, figure-based campaign patterns, services, and local symbols, as demonstrated by Nur Muttaqin, can serve as an effective winning strategy model in legislative political contests in other regions with similar characteristics.

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