

## Comparison of male and female candidates' perceptions in interpreting failure in the 2024 central java legislative elections

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### **Abstract**

The phenomenon of legislative candidates experiencing depression or psychosis recurs every election. This is due to the increasing number of candidates entering this free political market, while the quota is limited. Ultimately, competition is inevitable, even though they are not mentally or psychologically prepared. However, some candidates are not "deterred" by their failures. Instead of experiencing stress, they run again in the next election period. These differing actions raise questions about the relationship between perceptions and views on how failures are interpreted during elections.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the comparative perceptions of male and female legislative candidates regarding the meaning of failure in the 2024 Central Java Legislative Election. Perception is the process by which a person provides a response, meaning, image, or interpretation to what they see, hear, or feel through their senses. The results of this process are reflected in the individual's attitudes, opinions, and behavior. Psychologically, men and women have different characteristics influenced by biological, social, and cultural factors. This study is a mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative) study.

Based on the research conducted, the results showed that there were differences in the meaning of failure in the Central Java legislative elections between male and female legislative candidates. Female legislative candidates interpreted failure more emotionally and less rationally, while male legislative candidates interpreted failure less emotionally and more rationally. Based on the results of the study, there was a gap between the meaning of failure according to men and women, men view women's positions as privileged (positive meaning), while women view women's positions as inferior to men (negative meaning). Women are only considered to fulfill the 30% representation requirement. Meanwhile, women dared to run for candidacy more because of the support of those closest to them, while men dared to run for candidacy more because of the support of their party. Male legislative candidates have a positive meaning, failure as part of learning, while female legislative candidates have a negative meaning, where failure is something that hurts.

Men and women are naturally different, including in their perceptions. However, it's best to prepare beforehand, especially psychologically, so that losing an election doesn't become a psychological issue. Being prepared is crucial when running for office.

**Keywords:** legislative candidates; meaning of failure; perception.

### **1. Introduction**

The election of legislative candidates is truly a form of democratic celebration that should be interpreted positively by all parties. Competition in general elections is natural, if balanced with personal motives and a correct understanding of the context of power. However, many parties in this regard, especially those running for office, have differing perceptions or views. This is evidenced by the increasing number of legislative candidates (Caleg) experiencing stress or depression after learning they were not elected. For example, in the 2024 legislative elections, actions by legislative candidates experiencing stress due to their failure began to emerge. These actions range from asking for the return of money they received to the recently viral event of a candidate removing paving blocks, taking the train back and forth, not returning home, and many other actions carried out by these failed candidates. This phenomenon of depressed or psychotic candidates recurs every election, due to the increasing number of candidates entering this free political market, while the quota is limited. Ultimately, competition is unavoidable if the mental or psychological state is not yet read.

However, some legislative candidates are not discouraged by their failures. Instead of experiencing stress, they run again in the next election period. Some run again after three failures, while others run after five failures. These differing actions raise questions about the relationship between perceptions and views on how failure is interpreted during elections. Winning and losing in a political contest should

be considered normal. Each party must be prepared for the situation and consequences of winning and losing. Different interpretations of failure will lead to different actions.

According to the Indonesian Encyclopedia, perception is a mental process that produces an image in an individual so that they can recognize an object by associating it with a particular memory, either through the sense of sight, the sense of touch, and so on so that finally the image can be realized (Indonesian Encyclopedia, 1990, p. 759). A person's perception is influenced by several factors including experience, learning processes, insight, and individual knowledge. Experience and learning factors will shape what is seen, heard, and felt, while individual insight and knowledge will give meaning to psychological objects.

If we look at the current phenomenon, many legislative candidates experiencing depression or stress are men. Meanwhile, women are more likely to run for office again, even after experiencing failure more than once. This phenomenon raises a major question: does this mean there are differences in perceptions of failure between women and men, which then shape their actions? This research seeks to analyze this.

Based on previous research by Sefani (2023) entitled "Women's Perceptions of Female Legislative Candidates in the 2024 General Election (Case Study of Banda Aceh City)" and research conducted by Ahmad Yusuf (2014) in the Political Review Journal Vol. 4 No. 2 of 2014, entitled "The Influence of Public Perception of Legislative Candidates on Voting Behavior in the 2014 Legislative Election in Sidoarjo", have similarities with this research, namely both discuss perception and both use quantitative methods. The difference with this research is that in Sefani's research, the perception is intended to see women's perceptions of female legislative candidates only, not comparing. And in Ahmad Yusuf's research, both discuss perceptions of legislative candidates, but the difference is in the respondents, namely from the perspective of society, not from the perspective of the legislative candidates. Thus, this research was conducted to provide a different discourse in discussing and analyzing the perceptions of legislative candidates and enrich studies related to elections and democracy.

## **2. Methodology**

This study uses a mix-method (qualitative-quantitative) method. Respondents were selected using purposive random sampling. The subjects of this study included: 2024 Central Java Provincial DPRD legislative candidates, consisting of men and women who failed in their candidacy in the 2024 legislative elections. Qualitative data collection was conducted by providing closed-ended questions to 9 informants. Quantitative data collection was conducted by distributing questionnaires based on a Likert scale.

## **3. Results and discussion**

### **3.1 Male Legislative Candidates' Perceptions of Failure in Elections**

Perception is the brain's processing of how to understand or evaluate events occurring around them. The study of perception aims to identify how humans experience and understand the world around them. Human perception can vary due to differences in perspectives and how information is captured through the senses. Some individuals perceive something positively, while others may have negative perceptions, which can ultimately influence their actions in everyday life.

According to Walgito (2003), perception is a cognitive process that enables a person to assign meaning to their environment, enabling them to interpret and understand the world around them. Therefore, each individual has a different perspective and interpretation of a particular object.

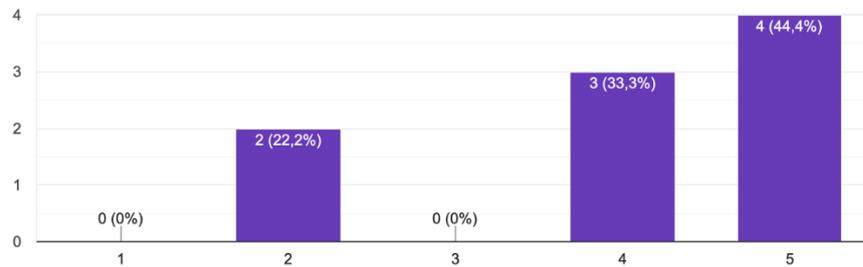
The perception process has two main components: selection and interpretation. Selection is the process by which the senses filter environmental stimuli based on specific intensity and characteristics. Interpretation, on the other hand, is the process of organizing information to make it meaningful to the individual. This process is influenced by various factors, such as past experiences, value systems, motivation, personality, and intelligence. Furthermore, the results of a person's interpretation and perception can be manifested in behavior in response to the information received. This means that perception involves the stages of selection, interpretation, and organizing information into a meaningful whole (Meliza, Wanto, & Asha, 2020).

Based on the results of interviews conducted with male legislative candidates, the meaning of defeat is a real experience in politics and a costly lesson.

"The meaning of this failure for me is that I dare to fight even if I lose in any way." (interview with TAPD)

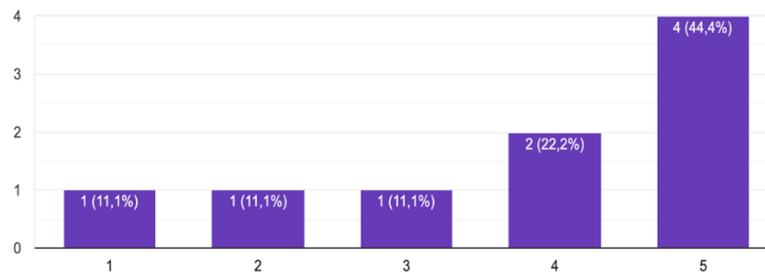
"This failure is a real experience in politics." (interview with MS)

Based on research conducted on nine legislative candidates, 33.3% agreed that failure is a political learning process, 44.4% strongly agreed that failure is a political learning process, and 22.2% disagreed that failure is a political learning process. Those who agreed and strongly agreed were all male candidates.



**Figure 1.** Legislative Candidates' Perceptions of Failure in Elections

Based on the research results, 44.4% stated that they strongly agreed that failure was part of the dynamics of democracy, 22.2% stated that they agreed that failure was part of the dynamics of democracy, and they were all male.



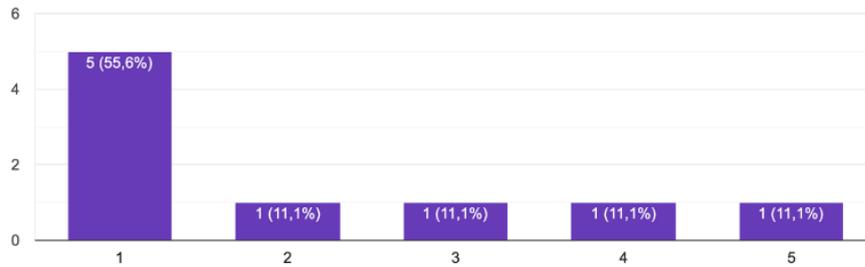
**Figure 2.** Interpreting failure as part of the dynamics of democracy

Their feelings when they lost the election were answered casually, and they admitted they were prepared for defeat, especially if they had tried several times to run.

"The disappointment the second time was less painful (lighter) than the first (it's human nature). The vote count has improved, so we have to realize that it's normal in any competition to lose and win." (Interview with AKL)

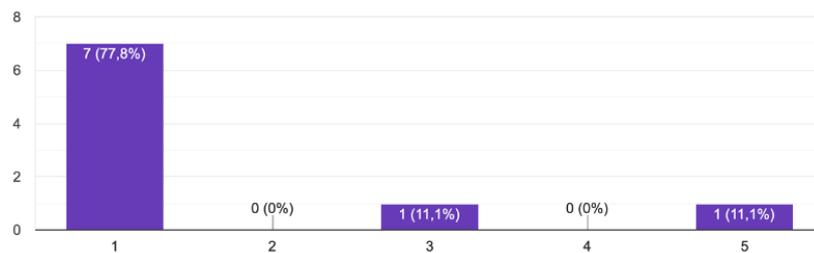
"My feelings were normal, I was prepared for defeat because the preparation time was very short, less than six months." (Interview with MS)

Based on the research results, 55.6% strongly disagreed with feeling disappointed and hopeless after experiencing failure, and all were male.



**Figure 3.** Disappointment and hopelessness after experiencing failure

Based on the research results, as many as 77.8% stated that they strongly disagreed that failure affects mental and emotional health, and all of them were male legislative candidates.



**Figure 4.** Failure affects mental and emotional well-being

### 3.2 Female Candidates' Perceptions of Election Failure

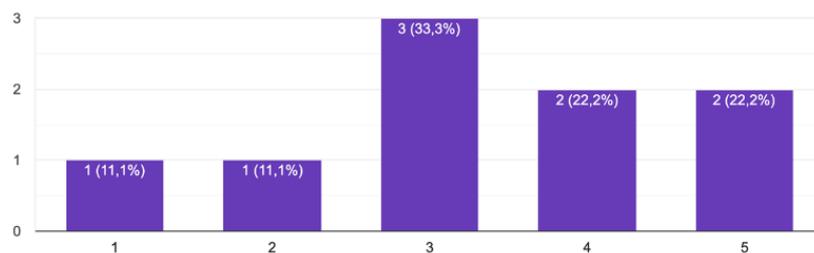
Female candidates have different perceptions than male candidates. They interpret failure more emotionally and emotionally.

"Even though it was predicted, I was still full of disappointment and embarrassment when facing people, both in my constituency and within the party." (interview with SK)

Some also interpreted their election failure as a sign of inferiority, feeling they were merely a political tool.

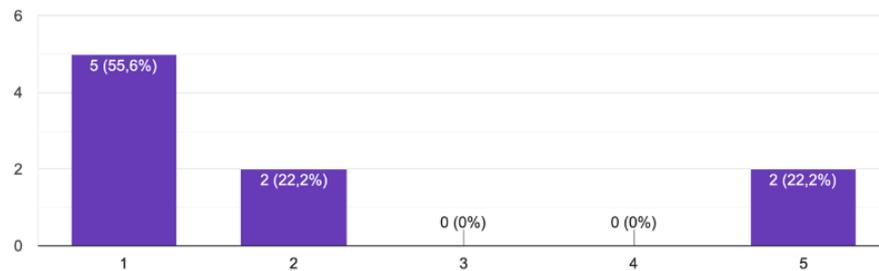
"It wasn't that significant, because I was just a requirement for the lack of female candidates." (interview with SL)

Based on the research results, 22.2% strongly agreed that the election was not fair, and all of them were women.



**Figure 5.** Feelings about elections not going smoothly

Based on the research results, 22.2% of respondents strongly agreed that there was unequal treatment between male and female legislative candidates during the campaign process. All of them were female candidates.



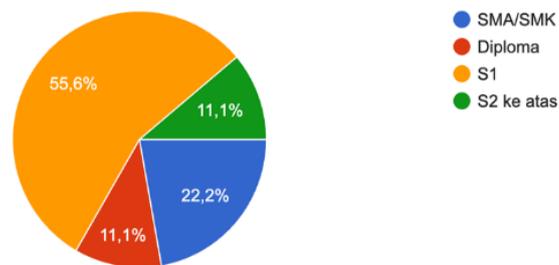
**Figure 6.** Feelings about the inequality of treatment between female and male legislative candidates in the campaign process

### 3.3. Comparison of Male and Female Candidates' Perceptions of Failure in Legislative Elections

According to Jalaludin Rakhmat in Communication Psychology (2008: 52-58), a person's perception is largely determined by two main factors: functional and structural.

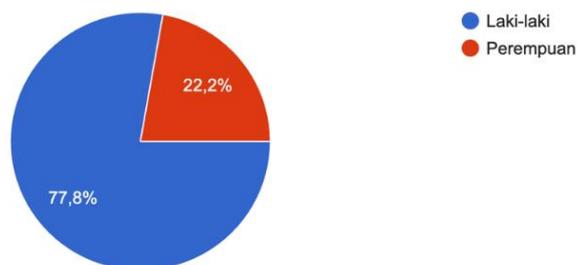
#### 3.3.1. Functional or Personal Factors

Some factors included in these functional factors include individual needs, experience, age, past experiences, personality, gender, educational background, demographics, and other subjective factors. Based on the research conducted, the nine respondents ranged in age from 34 to 61 years old, with experience in politics and organizations. They were mostly male, with backgrounds ranging from high school to master's degrees. The following diagram shows the respondents' educational backgrounds.



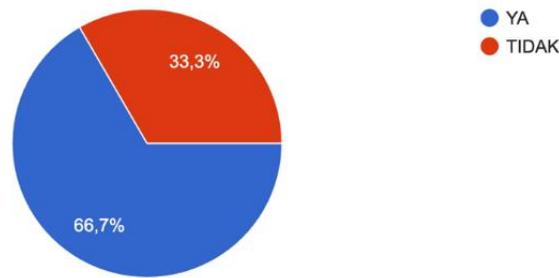
**Figure 7.** Educational Factors

And here is a diagram of the gender of the respondents.

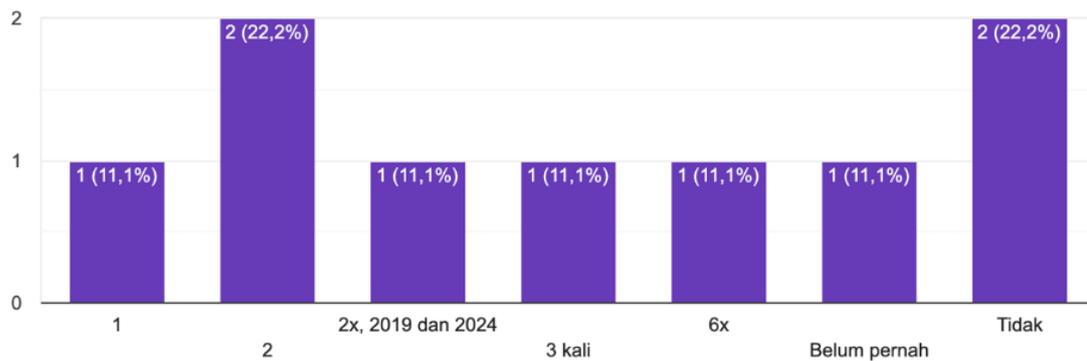


**Figure 8.** Gender Factors

Most respondents had previously run in elections, ranging from never running at all to having run up to six times.



**Figure 9.** The number of respondents who have run in elections



**Figure 10.** Number of legislators run in elections

### 3.3.2. Structural factors or factors external to the individual. The family environment, applicable laws, and societal values are all part of this factor.

Of course, perceptions don't emerge spontaneously, but rather because of these factors. Consequently, a decision regarding an object is formed through the assignment of value or meaning to that object. In this regard, male and female legislative candidates have different meanings. Besides being influenced by patriarchal culture, male and female candidates experience different conditions during the election.

"There are differences in experiences regarding candidacy requirements. The proportion of men is greater than that of women in an electoral district. The interpretation of failure certainly depends on the individual." (Interview with AM)

"The quota for female candidates is calculated based on the percentage of male candidates." (Interview with SL)

"Where the proportion of men is greater than that of women in one electoral district." (Interview with YMM)

The natural characteristics of both also influence perceptions of failure during elections.

"Visually, women are more emotional and less rational." (Interview with MT)

However, according to male legislative candidates, women sometimes receive preferential treatment.

"Women are sometimes even special. Although sometimes parties are careless in filling their quotas for female legislative candidates." (Interview with WPP)

When asked whether they would run for office again, 33.3% responded strongly agreed, and 22.2% strongly agreed. Most of those willing to run again were male. This suggests that male candidates have a more positive perception of failure than female candidates.

#### 4. Conclusion

There are differences in the perceptions of male and female legislative candidates in interpreting failure in elections. Based on the results of the study, there is a gap between the meaning of failure according to men and women. Men view women's position as privileged (positive meaning), while women view women's position as inferior to men (negative meaning). Women are only considered to fulfill the requirement of 30% representation. Meanwhile, women dare to run for candidacy more because of the support of those closest to them, while men dare to run for candidacy more because of the support of the party. Male legislative candidates have a positive meaning, failure as part of learning, while female legislative candidates have a negative meaning, where failure is something that hurts.

#### 5. Acknowledge

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