

# Polarization in the Political Choices of Regional Heads in the Reform Era, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia

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## Abstract

This article is based on the issue of polarization during the election of the Governor and Deputy Governor in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) Province, Indonesia, in 2018. In the Election Vulnerability Index study, NTB Province scored 3.50 or had significant vulnerability related to candidacy, campaigns, contestants, and violence. This is interesting because it contradicts the goal of decentralization in 1998 since Indonesia entered the reform era. The reform era in Indonesia is being encouraged so that all government systems, including regional head elections, become more democratic. The reform era is also urged to eliminate specific ethnic issues, such as the Javanese controlling local government in Indonesia. However, what happened when reform and decentralization began to be implemented was the phenomenon of polarization at the local level when regional head elections were held. This article is interesting because it presents the factors that caused polarization in NTB society during the 2018 regional head elections. The method used in this article is a literature review. This article focuses on findings from relevant theories related to sociological voting behavior and polarization. This article also concludes that there was polarization in NTB society during regional head elections due to vital ethnic issues and harmful stereotypes about women as leaders in the region. In the 2018 election for Governor and Deputy Governor of NTB, four pairs of candidates participated, and there was one woman candidate for deputy governor. Apart from that, polarization is compounded by the presence of the media, which increasingly strengthens information regarding the ethnicity and gender of candidates in NTB society.

**Keywords:** Ethnicity, Gender, Media, Polarization, Sociology.

## Introduction

Based on Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 1965, the regional level of the Indonesian government is divided into areas of the Central Government of Indonesia, then areas of level I or under the central government, which are called Provinces, and areas of level II or below provinces which are called Regencies and Cities. A President and a Vice President lead Indonesia's central government region, while the Governor and Deputy Governor lead

the Provinces. Meanwhile, under the Province are Regencies led by the Regent and Deputy Regent, while the City is led by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor (Indonesia, 1965).

In connection with the election of regional heads at level I (Province) and level II (Regency and City), during the New Order period 1967-1998, the Governors, Regents and Mayors were elected by the President and the Minister of Home Affairs through the Members of the People's Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia (Chakim, 2014). This regulation is supported by Law Number 22 of 1948, article 18 part V concerning regional heads. Level I regional heads (Governor and Deputy Governor) are elected by the President, who is proposed by the Level I People's Representative Council. Meanwhile, Level II regional heads (Regents and Deputy Regent or Mayor and Deputy Mayor) are elected by the Minister of Home Affairs, who is proposed by the Level I People's Representative Council II (Nugraha & Mulyandari, 2016).

According to Lay (2012) in his article, one of the impacts of the election of regional heads by the President, Minister of Home Affairs, and the People's Representative Council is that there are many regional heads at level I (Governor and Deputy Governor) and level II (Regent and Deputy Regent or Mayor and Deputy Mayor) who comes from a relative of the President. One example is during the reign of Indonesia's second President, General Soeharto, which was referred to as the New Order. At that time, regional heads throughout Indonesia were filled with military members and General Soeharto's colleagues from Java and Jakarta (the capital of Indonesia) to lead the regions. President General Suharto selected them. This also happens at the provincial, district, and city levels in NTB. Therefore, because the government system was run through collusion and nepotism by General Soeharto and his relatives, in 1998, the Indonesian people overthrew the new order and wanted all systems to become democratic, including regional head elections. The era is referred to as reform or replacing the new order system.

Regarding more democratic regional head elections, one of the Indonesian people wants direct regional head elections to be elected by the people, no longer by the President, Ministers, and the people's representative council. Therefore, direct regional head elections by the Indonesian people began on June 1, 2005 (Yusyanti, 2015). Meanwhile, some regions, such as West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) Province, only started in 2008 or 63 years after Indonesia's independence (detiknews, 2008).

According to Novianto et al (2015), the direct election of regional heads by the Indonesian people can bring about democratization and eliminate the representation of regional heads from certain groups, such as from the Javanese tribe (Jawaism), so that the region fully manages government authority, and leaders can be present from the local community. In various concepts, decentralization is the program of transferring government authority to the most minor or local area. Democratic decentralization aims to give more responsibility to the power of lower actors (Nordholt & Klinken, 2007). Suppose it relates to Indonesia's situation after the reform era entered. In that case, regional governments at the provincial, district, and city levels have more responsibility to develop their regions, unlike during the New Order era, which was centered in Jakarta as the National Capital (Djumadin, 2022).

According to Rachmat and Esther (2016), the direct election of regional heads by the people ultimately encourages the presence of group interests, for example, ethnic or community groups in each region, to become stronger. Currently presenting primordialism, political symbols, and language to gain legitimacy and greater public sympathy because the people they choose to be leaders are those around them. Since then, political choices have

been driven by voters' assessment of regional leadership candidates regarding the candidates' ethnicity, and gender has become increasingly linked to the candidates' religion. Therefore, political choices are increasingly based on sociological assessments, so the idea of bringing democratization to regional society, eliminating collusion and nepotism, becomes polarization in society.

This article discusses people's political choices in the 2018 Regional Head Election in West Nusa Tenggara Province, which still has solid sociological elements and presents societal polarization. Political choices based on ethnicity, the assessment of a woman who is in the political realm as a regional head is sometimes connected to religion because Islam in NTB Province is quite strong (Purnomo, 2016). Ultimately, this phenomenon often divides regional community unity. In a study by Yamin and the research team from the General Election Supervisory Agency (2018), the results of the Election Vulnerability Index, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) Province in 2018 received a very high score or significant vulnerability, namely 3.50 regarding contestation. Contestation variables relate to candidacy, campaigns, contestants, and violence. From this data, the author is interested in studying the factors that create societal polarization, resulting in very high levels of vulnerability during regional head elections in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) Province. In particular, when the dissemination of information in the media becomes more open, as it is now, it can cause greater polarization.

### **Political Choice**

According to Miaz (2012), two main components concern voting behavior when holding general elections. First, political participation in enlivening general elections by participating in campaigns and funding voters to choose a party or leader candidate. Second, regarding political choices, or if political participation has been carried out, it is necessary to know why voters choose one of the leadership candidates or parties in the general election. This research only focuses on political choices and does not discuss political participation. A person's political choices are a result of the influences around him. This influence can be seen from the voter's background and environmental influences. According to Mujani, Liddle and Ambardi (2012), the approach used to study political choices can be made sociologically, psychologically and rationally. However, this study only focuses on analyzing voter assessments sociologically. In the writings of Budiman and Irwandi (2020), sociological political choices are very closely related to social factors around voters.

Sociologically driven political choices were first introduced by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948). They were from Columbia University and researched the American Presidential Election. Their study focused on Erie Country, Ohio, in 1940 for six months. The research they conducted used quantitative and qualitative research types. The quantitative method is used to understand the level of media exposure and socio-economics of people in Erie Country. In contrast, the qualitative method is used to understand the factors influencing voters in the American Presidential election. Regarding sociological political choices, finally, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948) discovered religion, gender, age, residential area, residential location, ethnicity, race, marital status, education, employment, monthly income (salary), place of work, and the organizations that voters join are factors that determine their choice of a President. However, because this article has various similarities between candidates, not all sociological factors can be analyzed.

In this article, sociological political choices by voters are related to the ethnic origin of candidates. The candidate ethnicity is chosen because the four candidate pairs have different ethnicities, such as the Sasak ethnic group or the majority ethnic group in NTB, Mbojo, and

Samawa. Apart from ethnicity, this research also looks at stereotypes related to gender, which are connected to the way women view politics in the Islamic religion. This study was chosen because one of the candidates for deputy governor of NTB, namely Dr. Hj Sitti Rohmi Djalillah, M.Pd, is a woman. They are assessing women regional head candidates in NTB as interesting. In several studies, gender cannot be separated from religion, especially in political studies in areas where traditional culture is still strong.

NTB province, with the development of traditional, patriarchal Islam, women's identity in politics is still complex to accept in NTB province. In NTB Province, it refers to ulama or kiai (Islamic religious leaders and teachers) with various local or ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, all the ulama are men. For example, Tuan Guru Haji (TGH) is the name for the Sasak tribe clerics, Dea Guru for the Samawa tribe, and Muma' for the Mbojo tribe's Al-Quran teacher. This identity is used as legitimacy not only in the religious field but also in the political and cultural fields (Purnomo, 2016). Apart from that, women candidates have a weak position in Indonesian politics; for example, in the 1999 election, there was talk of a women president. Islamic politicians argue that religion does not allow women to be leaders (Masykuroh, 2020).

In research of Kaesmetan (2019), ethnicity is still considered the leading societal factor when assessing candidates from a sociological perspective. Ethnicity is a complex construct that includes commitment and feelings of togetherness in the group, positive assessment of the group, interest, knowledge about the group, and involvement in the social activities of the same group (Widodo, 2019).

Still, in Kaesmetan (2019), it is related to gender. Gender is associated with a sociological approach in a social context and is explained by demographic assessment as the selection of men and women and socio-economic assessment. In a sense, voters can assess gender as a choice because there are voters who are more interested in male leaders and those who are interested in women leaders who are associated with physical attractiveness and are traditionally seen as being associated with religion. So, there is often an assessment that men are more suitable to be leaders than women (Ibrahim, 2018).

In various studies, sociological political choices are still present among regional communities in Indonesia today, according to Atika and Hasan (2020), who studied the political choices of voters in Payakumbuh City, West Sumatra Province, Indonesia, in the 2019 Indonesian presidential and vice president elections. The study carried out by Atika and Hasan (2020) used qualitative methods with in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Their study focuses on voters' evaluations of Vice Presidential candidate KH. Ma'Ruf Amin was paired with Presidential Candidate Joko Widodo and was booming then. Even though they are no longer young, the people of Payakumbuh City consider KH. Ma'Ruf Amin is a devout religious person because he is a former Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Chairman and a prominent religious figure. Based on sociological analysis of voters' political choices, researchers assess that voters are influenced by ethnic leaders, too, most of whom choose KH. Ma'Ruf Amin during the election. Therefore, in research conducted by Atika and Hasan (2020), they assess that the political choices of voters in Payakumbuh City, West Sumatra Province, are still sociologically strong.

Apart from political choices in Indonesia, a sociological study of political choices was also carried out by Gaddini (2023), who studied racism in general elections in the United States, especially during the time of President Donald Trump. When Donald Trump led America, there was much bad campaigning regarding race, dividing white and black Americans, and religion called "Defensive Racism." This research was conducted using qualitative ethnographic methods with interviews and observations. Based on ethnographic

data from October 2020 to November 2022 shows how a group of white Evangelicals reproduce the racial and moral order through expressions of racial defense. Gaddini's (2023) study also deepens and refines the concept of Christian nationalism, which seeks to uphold the idea of a devoutly Christian nation by situating the anti-black racism of conservative white Evangelicals about President Trump's position. From this study, it is known that there are still many people who support Trump's campaign and assess candidates based on sociological origins, such as similarities in race and religion regarding becoming leaders at the regional and central levels.

Subsequent research by Apriani (2019) related to sociological political choices by assessing candidates' gender. Apriani (2019) analyzed women regional heads and Indonesia's People's Representative Council members. This analysis was carried out qualitatively with documentation. Apriani (2019) found that relatives or family factors still greatly influence women's electability in general elections. The study found that women who became regional heads were inseparable from "Strong Men" who had a strong influence or had previously led in that region. Women who become regional heads still have ties of blood, marriage, or kinship with a previous community figure or leader, so women in politics cannot be separated from the presence of men beside them and cannot be independent in the political space.

Research related to women in the political space was also conducted by Shim (2021), who studied the involvement of women politicians in the legislatures of South Korea and the Republic of China or Taiwan with documentation analysis. His study found that women were considered essential figures in the legislature. Apart from that, society has started to trust women in the political space. However, interestingly, in Shim's (2021) study, women politicians are still more widely chosen by women voters than male voters. Women voters hope that legislators from among them will be able to voice women's rights, for example, regarding flexible working hours for women, legal and easily accessible abortion, reducing domestic violence, and preventing breast cancer. Even though the study found that the quota for women in the legislature in South Korea and Taiwan increased, most men did not elect women. In the context of Shim's (2021) study, not many men still trust women's legislative candidates and even think that women legislators will only speak specifically about their needs. Therefore, political choices in South Korea and Taiwan still consider women in politics as a form of small representation and can only discuss specific studies about women rather than other general public issues.

### **Polarization in Political Choices**

The concept of polarization relates to groups that live in the same area but are divided into each other because they have different ideological, political, and social views (Karim, 2019). Apart from differences in views, polarization is closely related to division. Divisions occur due to differences in the views of individuals or groups with the views of others (Khasanah & Wawuan, 2023). Regarding political choices, polarization can impact vulnerability or chaos in general elections.

In DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson's (1996) writings, the concept of polarization in politics is divided into two models: condition and process. First, polarization is considered a condition, meaning the extent to which a view is disputed because of various paradigms. Second, polarization as a process is assessed as increasing opposition over time, in the sense that a difference of opinion will form a sustainable opposition. In general elections, voters who choose the winning candidate or party will feel satisfied, thereby strengthening their position, and the losing party will continue to join the opposition, which, in the end, can create

vulnerability. Vulnerability can be like fighting, destruction, and breakdown of relationships between individuals and groups.

In several countries, polarization and politics are inseparable from various problem backgrounds. In a book edited by Carothers and O'Donohue (2020), they write about the polarization in India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. First, political polarization in India is related to the fundamental question of whether the Indian nation is becoming a secular state or a Hindu Rashtra state (Hindhu Nation). The initial polarization emerged mainly because the majority, 80% of India's population, is Hindu. Political unrest in India is compounded by cases of intolerance towards the Muslim minority community in India. This view is in contrast to Mahatma Gandhi, who, although a devout Hindu, viewed the Indian nation as a collection of harmonious religious communities who were treated as equals. However, Hindu nationalists in India hold a different view, that minorities need to assimilate and must accept the limitations of Indian Hindu culture. So, this phenomenon extends to the level of political choices and insecurity in choosing leaders and is even related to the political policies of the Indian government.

Second, due to diverse social, economic, and political conditions, Sri Lanka is starting to split. Apart from that, divisions also occur based on ethnicity, caste, and place of residence. Since the end of the 19th century, the forces of Sinhala Buddhist nationalists and Tamil nationalists have triggered the birth of polarization as a social and political strategy to attract the attention of their supporters. Interestingly, this division is not only related to ethnicity but extends to religion and language. The Sinhalese community is primarily Buddhist, and the Tamil community is predominantly Hindu. Both have different languages. Of course, these differences are also related to political choices and the political attitudes of supporters when choosing leaders in Sri Lanka.

Finally, Thailand's society is divided because the kingdom's nationalist elite considers the King of Thailand to be the legitimate ruler of their country, while the view of the democratic elite is that the highest power is in the hands of the people. Even the kingdom's nationalist elite plans to abolish electoral democracy, so these views are detrimental to society, especially those who are pro-democracy.

Almost the same as polarization in India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, Nasrullah's (2023) study of polarization in Indonesia in several studies began during the 2014 election for the President and Vice President of Indonesia, which was attended by two pairs of candidates, namely Ir. H. Joko Widodo paired with Drs. H.M. Jusuf Kalla against H. Prabowo Subianto paired with Hatta Rajasa. At that time, terms were born that divided voters, especially among those who thought they were affiliated with Islamic groups. The divisions increasingly occurred during the election of the Governor and Deputy Governor of the Special Region of Indonesia (DKI) Jakarta, which gave rise to many identity political conflicts as Muslim and non-Muslim Governors, resulting in the birth of elements who disrespected Ethnicity, Religion, Race and Intergroup as better than other groups. According to Nasrullah (2023), polarization occurs more at the grassroots or local community than at the elite level at the center. Many people identify as supporters of one candidate, so friction occurs more at the lower level, while elites sometimes carry out transactional politics.

**Polarization in the Election of Governor and Deputy Governor of NTB**

Grassroots politics cannot be separated from the most minor line in general elections in Indonesia, namely the elections for regional heads at levels I and II. The 2018 election for Governor and Deputy Governor of West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) also presents a battle of identities. According to Ronaldo and Darmiza (2021), local or regional communities are steeped in primordialism with similar views between regions, religions, cultures, languages, and organizations. Conceptually, this view emphasizes the presence of ethnic identity.

Data was accessed from the NTB Provincial Government survey report and Olat Maras Institute (2021), NTB Province, which is one of 38 level I governments in Indonesia. NTB has three large tribes, with the majority being the Sasak tribe, followed by the Mbojo tribe, and the Samawa tribe being the smallest of the three tribes. The Sasak tribe constitutes 74% of all tribes in NTB Province. Most of the Sasak tribe live in all districts and cities on Lombok Island. The second largest tribe in NTB Province is the Mbojo tribe, which makes up 16.5% of all tribes in NTB Province. Most Mbojo tribes live in Bima Regency, Bima City, and Dompu Regency.

Meanwhile, the third largest tribe is the Samawa tribe, which is 7.5% of the total ethnic groups in NTB Province. Most of the Samawa tribe live in West Sumbawa Regency and Sumbawa Regency. The rest are ethnic minorities, such as Balinese 0.5%, Javanese 0.3%, Bugis 0.4%, and others 0.8% in NTB Province.

If it is related to the candidates for Governor and Deputy Governor of NTB Province in 2018, the ethnic origins of the candidates are as follows (Wendyartaka, 2018).

Table 1

*Ethnic origins of candidates*

<b>Candidates Number</b>	<b>Names of Candidates</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>The Ethnic of Candidates</b>
1	H. Mohammad Suhaili FT, SH H. Muhammad Amin, MH	Governor Candidate Deputy Governor Candidate	Sasak Samawa
2	Tuan Guru H.Ahyar Abduh H. Mori Hanafi, SE	Governor Candidate Deputy Governor Candidate	Sasak Mbojo
3	Dr. H. Zulkieflimansyah, MSc Dr. Hj. Sitti Rohmi Djalillah	Governor Candidate Deputy Governor Candidate	Samawa Sasak
4	Dr. H. Ali Bin Dahlan Tuan Guru Haji Ali Sakti	Governor Candidate Deputy Governor Candidate	Sasak Sasak

This form of polarization between various ethnic groups appears in mass media reports. As quoted in the article by Andriani et al (2018), which is about local media reporting in NTB to support pair number 4, Dr. H. Zulkieflimansyah, M.Sc, and Dr. Hj. Sitti Rohmi Djalillah (Zul-Rohmi) who can encourage polarization between supporters by looking at ethnic factors, "The longing of the people of Bima in particular, and the island of Sumbawa in general, for the leadership of the Son of Sumbawa Island, cannot be contained any longer. This is not just an emotional sentiment. "But more than that, the presence of Candidate Candidate Zul-Rohmi, who represents two figures from Sumbawa Island (Samawa Ethnic) and Lombok Island

(Sasak Ethnic), strengthens the image that NTB is an open province" (Stabilitas Newspaper, 2018 in Andriani et al., 2018).

This quote shows the gap between one ethnicity and another. It is not without reason that there is excellent support for the Zul-Rohmi pair because since the NTB Province was founded, there has never been a Samawa tribe as Governor of NTB. Even in Soerjo's article (2022), it is explained that Zul comes from an ethnic minority in NTB. However, insecurity in the election of regional heads can arise and increasingly become a rift when some consider themselves "original people from that region or natives" of that region. According to Santoso (2019), ethnic influence by considering oneself as an original person from an ethnic group can bring about political upheaval, so it is natural that based on the Election Vulnerability Index, NTB Province is categorized as very high, namely 3.50 regarding contestation (Yamin et al, 2018).

The following analysis relates to the sociological political choices of voters in viewing women in politics. One of the studies conducted by Masykuroh (2020) showed that there is still a patriarchal culture in Indonesian politics. One of them is that Indonesia targets every period women can enter parliament or become members of the Central People's Representative Council up to 30%. However, based on the data, this figure still needs to be achieved (Kurniawan, 2014).

Table 2

*Number of woman and man members of the Indonesian People's Representative Council*

<b>Representation of Women in the DPR-RI from the 1950-2014 Period</b>				
<b>Period</b>	<b>Women</b>		<b>Men</b>	
	<b>Amount</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>%</b>
1950 – 1955	9	3,8	236	96,2
1955 – 1960	17	6,3	255	93,7
Konstituante : 1956 – 1959	25	5,1	488	94,9
1971 – 1977	36	7,83	424	92,2
1977 – 1982	29	6,3	431	93,7
1982 – 1987	39	8,5	421	91,5
1987 – 1992	65	13,9	435	87
1992 – 1997	62	12,5	438	87,5
1997 – 1999	54	10,8	446	89,2
1999 – 2004	45	9	455	91
2004 – 2009	61	11,09	489	89,3
2009 - 2014	101	17,86	459	82,14

Adding to the studies of Masykuroh (2020); Kurniawan (2014); Ardiansa (2016), in his analysis, explains that the small number of women in the Central People's Council is not without reason. On average, women are nominated in the third voting number, while men, on average, fill the first and second voting numbers. His research found that, on average, voters are more accustomed to choosing vote number one or two during general elections. Therefore, women in Indonesian politics are still seen as mere party accessories, especially when it comes to religion.

Still, in the writings of Andriani et al (2018), which quote the Stability Newspaper's report on the 2018 NTB Governor and Deputy Governor Election,



"However, loyalists to Governor TGB, who is currently still in office, have also boosted Zul-Rohmi's votes in Bima. Especially from provincial officials and religious groups. "Moreover, the candidate for Deputy Governor, Dr Sitti Rohmi Djalilah, is TGB's older brother," said Agus Salim" (Stabilitas Newspaper, 2018 in Andriani, Hidayatullah & Ishaka, 2018)

The news shows that the winning force in the election of Governor and Deputy Governor of NTB was from religious groups linked to Islam as the majority religion in NTB Province. Apart from Lombok Island (Sasak tribe), the Samawa tribe in Sumbawa and West Sumbawa Regencies adhere to daily life, which is also based on the philosophy of "Barenti Lako Syara, Syara Barenti Lako Kitabullah," which means the rules, values and customary norms that are believed or used as a basis, life is based on Islamic law, parallel to the Koran and hadith. Likewise, the Mbojo tribe in Bima Regency, Dompu, and Bima City has a life philosophy of "Maja Labo Dahu," which means "shame and fear." Shame because it violates the rules, values, and norms in society. Fear means fear of punishment and retribution. These words refer to shame and fear of Allah SWT (Sumitro & Kurniawansyah, 2020).

In several studies, religion and stereotypes about gender in leading government cannot be separated, especially in political studies in areas where traditional religious culture is still strong. NTB province with the development of traditional, patriarchal Islam, women's identity in politics is still complex to accept in NTB province. These factors are what influence culture in society. For example, NTB Province is known for terms referring to ulama or kiai (Islamic religious leaders and teachers) with various local or ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, all the ulama are men. For example, Tuan Guru Haji (TGH) is the name for the Sasak tribe clerics, Dea Guru for the Samawa tribe, and Muma' for the Mbojo tribe's Al-Quran teacher. This identity is used as legitimacy not only in the religious field but also in the political and cultural fields. Purnomo (2016) explains that kiai or ulama are cultural connectors. Kiai in Islamic boarding schools can filter students' information and knowledge. Apart from that, kiai also play an active role in utilizing the information they obtain to carry out social change by offering an agenda that they believe can be carried out by students and the community around the Islamic boarding school. For example, in 1953, Tuan Guru kiai Haji Muhammad Zainuddin Abdul Majid (Tuan Guru Pancor) founded a center for Islamic religious, social, and Islamic preaching education called Nahdlatul Wathan (NW) and was the most prominent Islamic union in NTB based on Lombok Island. Now, NW is affiliated with many political parties (Fahrurrozi, 2017).

From the explanation above regarding media coverage of the election of Governor and Deputy Governor of NTB, the dissemination of information by the media deserves attention, as in the study of Khatimah (2018) in his article explaining that the development of the media in Indonesia currently cannot be separated from people's lives. Media is a mass communication tool that has the task of being a communicator and agent of change who is a pioneer of change in people's lives. Media messages can spread information, entertainment, education, or messages that can be reached by the public, including in political life. The relationship between voters, parties, and candidates cannot be separated from the media. Candidates for leadership and parties often use the media as a campaign tool to spread ideas or criticize local and national issues. Then, voters or the public can assess the campaign. Moreover, Indonesia has only recently opened up to the spirit of media freedom after entering the reform era, allowing the public to provide assessments of the government obtained from media information.

The media also played an essential role in the 2018 NTB Governor and Deputy Governor's election. In research by Andriani et al (2018), the framing method explains that the media always frames one of the candidates for Governor and Deputy Governor of NTB 2018, namely Dr. H. Zulkieflimansyah, M.Sc and Dr. Ir. Hj. Sitti Rohmi Djalillah, M.Pd (Zul Rohmi) as candidate for Governor and Deputy Governor of NTB who will win with various reports during the campaign. This victory was supported by survey data and the intensity of Zul-Rohmi's campaign to meet the people. Compared to other candidates, the intensity of campaigning to meet the public or direct communication with the Zul-Rohmi pair is the highest. Similar to research by Satriadi and colleagues (2020), which was also carried out using media content analysis, they believe that the victory of the Zul-Rohmi pair was caused by the presence of decisive media factors such as information in newspapers, billboards, and Facebook media, which could influence voting behavior in the NTB province. It is proper if the presence of the media can also influence the strengthening of societal polarization.

### **Conclusion**

In this section, the author tries to synthesize several existing literature reviews regarding the factors that encouraged polarization in NTB society during the 2018 NTB Governor and Deputy Governor election. Several studies in countries neighboring Indonesia, for example, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand have differences in polarization. These include religious factors, socio-economic differences, and ethnic strata (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2020). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, polarization began to emerge during the 2014 presidential and vice-presidential elections and the 2017 election of the governor and deputy governor of DKI Jakarta, where more emphasis was placed on the polarization of religious identities (Nashrullah, 2023).

The polarization phenomenon in Indonesia, especially at the local level and NTB Province, is odd. According to Novianto and colleagues (2015), after Indonesia enters into the reform era, it is hoped that regional or local governments can be independent and eliminate the representation of regional heads from certain groups, such as those from the Javanese tribe (Javaism) so that government authority is fully managed by the region, and can be present. Leaders from local communities. The hope is that local communities with similar and close ethnicities can collaborate to develop the region. However, this phenomenon has given rise to polarization in judging who is more suitable to lead the region, especially the presence of regional sons or candidates from those who consider themselves indigenous. This is coupled with the presence of religion, which stereotypes women as having difficulty becoming leaders, especially since NTB is a province with a solid Islamic religion (Purnomo, 2016). Mainly related to voters' political choices in regional head elections.

According to Mujani et al (201,2), one of the political choices is sociological, related to voters evaluating candidates by comparing them with their surroundings and their personalities, including ethnic and gender stereotypes of candidates, which can be linked to religious. These various views ultimately give rise to polarization. In the 2018 NTB Governor and Deputy Governor election, ethnicity became problematic because various ethnicities attended the regional head election. Meanwhile, regarding gender stereotypes, one of the deputy governors is women. Moreover, in various studies of politics and women, according to Masykuroh (2020), Indonesia is still strongly characterized by traditional Islam, which believes that Islam and women cannot be united. Therefore, it is natural that in the results of the Election Vulnerability Index, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) Province in 2018 received a very high score, namely 3.50 regarding contestation. Contestation variables relate to candidacy,

campaigns, contestants, and violence that are likely to occur in the surrounding area during regional head elections, especially if media reports politicize ethnic and gender content related to religion.

However, much can be seen in this study from the development of societal polarization. For example, in Mujani et al (2012) study, there are still psychological and rational political choices, especially for media studies. During Indonesia's reform period, which began in 1998, the media had an independent influence. Media workers and the public can convey information and criticize the government, especially when media enters the online era. Therefore, there are differences between the audience before and after the reform era. Before the reform era, audiences were more passive, whereas during the reform era, audiences were more active in using, disseminating, and interpreting media messages; from various research, audiences today are called the information society because audiences receive various kinds of information from various media (Respati, 2014). Therefore, specific analysis related to media and polarization of political choices in regional head elections can be developed in further studies.

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