

ABSTRAK

Relasi kekuasaan dalam kontestasi politik lokal tidak hanya ditentukan oleh kekuatan elektabilitas personal kandidat, melainkan juga oleh pengaruh jaringan elite lokal yang memainkan peran penting dalam mobilisasi dukungan. Fenomena ini tergambar dalam Pilkades Cikoneng tahun 2021, di mana Elin Herlina, seorang perempuan yang berhasil menjabat sebagai Kepala Desa selama dua periode, memenangkan pemilihan meskipun berhadapan dengan empat calon laki-laki lainnya. Kemenangan ini tidak terlepas dari keterlibatan para *local strongman* yang memainkan peran strategis melalui penyediaan dukungan logistik, pengaruh sosial, serta pembentukan opini di tengah masyarakat.

Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi terhadap berbagai aktor yang terlibat dalam Pilkades Cikoneng 2021, termasuk Elin Herlina, tim sukses, tokoh masyarakat, panitia Pilkades, serta warga desa. Untuk kerangka analisis, penelitian ini menggunakan konsep *local strongman* dari Joel Migdal (1988) yang memetakan kekuasaan lokal ke dalam tiga kategori utama, yaitu: (1) penguasaan wilayah dan sumber daya, (2) kontrol sosial, serta (3) legitimasi dan dukungan sosial. Sementara itu, teori patron-klien dari James C. Scott (1972) digunakan sebagai alat analisis untuk menjelaskan bagaimana relasi kuasa dalam tiga kategori tersebut berjalan melalui pertukaran timbal balik yang didasarkan pada ketimpangan sosial-ekonomi, keterikatan personal, fleksibilitas hubungan, serta loyalitas politik. Validasi data dilakukan dengan teknik triangulasi sumber, sedangkan analisis data menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemenangan Elin Herlina tidak semata-mata bertumpu pada popularitas personal, melainkan diperkuat oleh dukungan *local strongman* yang menyediakan sumber daya politik, memobilisasi massa, dan memperkuat legitimasi sosial di tingkat desa. Relasi kuasa yang terjalin bersifat patron-klien, di mana patron (elite lokal/*local strongman*) memberikan akses, bantuan, serta distribusi sumber daya, sedangkan klien (Elin Herlina) memberikan loyalitas politik dan dukungan elektoral. Bentuk timbal balik ini berlangsung secara fleksibel, tidak terlembagakan secara formal, namun memiliki nilai transaksional yang tinggi dan sesuai dengan teori yang digunakan bahwa praktik patronase dan klientelisme yang terjadi merepresentasikan kombinasi antara karakteristik *local strongman* ala Migdal dengan mekanisme patron-klien ala Scott. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa dinamika politik lokal di Desa Cikoneng dibangun melalui interaksi antara struktur kekuasaan informal, jaringan elite, dan loyalitas masyarakat yang terus direproduksi dalam setiap momentum politik desa.

Kata Kunci: Politik Patronase, Local Strongman, Relasi Kuasa, Pemilihan Kepala Desa, Elin Herlina.

ABSTRACT

Power relations in local political contests are not solely determined by the personal electability of candidates, but also by the influence of local elite networks that play a crucial role in mobilizing support. This phenomenon was evident in the 2021 Cikoneng Village Head Election (Pilkades), where Elin Herlina, a woman who successfully served two consecutive terms as village head, won the election despite competing against four male candidates. Her victory was inseparable from the involvement of local strongmen who played strategic roles through logistical support, social influence, and the shaping of public opinion. The relationships formed between Elin Herlina and the local strongmen reflect patronage and clientelism practices that constitute part of village political dynamics, while also demonstrating how local power operates through personal, transactional, and long-term relations.

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving various actors in the 2021 Cikoneng Pilkades, including Elin Herlina, campaign teams, community leaders, the election committee, and villagers. For the analytical framework, this research applies Joel Migdal's (1988) concept of local strongmen, which categorizes local power into three main dimensions: (1) control over territory and resources, (2) social control, and (3) legitimacy and social support. Meanwhile, James C. Scott's patron-client theory is used as an analytical tool to explain how power relations within these three dimensions operate through reciprocal exchanges rooted in socio-economic inequality, personal ties, flexible arrangements, and political loyalty. Data validation was conducted through source triangulation, while data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman.

The findings reveal that Elin Herlina's victory was not solely based on personal popularity, but was reinforced by the support of local strongmen who provided political resources, mobilized mass support, and strengthened social legitimacy at the village level. The power relations established took the form of patron-client ties, in which patrons (local strongmen and elites) provided access, assistance, and resource distribution, while the client (Elin Herlina) offered political loyalty and electoral support. This reciprocal relationship functioned flexibly, informally, yet carried strong transactional value deeply embedded within the social structure of the village community. These findings indicate that patronage and clientelism practices in the Cikoneng Pilkades represent a combination of Migdal's local strongman characteristics with Scott's patron-client mechanisms. Thus, this study emphasizes that the dynamics of local politics in Cikoneng Village are constructed through the interaction between informal power structures, elite networks, and community loyalty that are continuously reproduced in each village political contest.

Keywords: *Patronage Politics, Local Strongman, Power Relations, Village Head Election, Elin Herlina.*