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Choosing from the citizens' toolbox: disability activists as political candidates in Indonesia's 2019 general elections

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we explore the interaction between unconventional and conventional political participation of electoral candidates with disability who competed in Indonesia's 2019 general elections. Interviews with electoral candidates highlight that their reasons for entering the electoral race, and strategies adopted over the course of their campaigns, were shaped by their prior involvement in the disability rights movement. This connection between activism and electoral engagement demonstrates how the disability rights movement shaped political candidates' selection and use of political participation tools.

The significance of these findings has bearing for others seeking to understand the political behaviour of people with disability. In particular, it illustrates that community building based on unconventional political participation can positively influence the participation of people with disability in conventional politics despite ongoing challenges posed by accessibility, public perceptions of disability, and access to resources.

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Disability; social movements; political participation; elections; Indonesia

Points of interest

- The 2019 election was the first national legislative election to be held after Indonesia's new disability law was passed in 2016, and many more people with a disability competed than in it compared to previous elections.
- Most candidates who ran did not have any previous experience running for public office, but the majority did have experience with disability activism.
- Candidates were motivated to run for office to build on the previous successes of the disability movement, to make sure people with disability had a voice within parliament and to use the electoral campaign to raise awareness about disability rights within the community.

- Candidates with a disability struggled with physical accessibility, social stigma, and costs during campaigning.
- Ultimately, it was the skills, networks and resources that candidates previously acquired through their links with the disability movement that helped them to negotiate these limitations.

Introduction

Scholars of political participation have debated how to theorise the relationship between activism, which is often described as an ‘unconventional’ form of political participation, and ‘conventional’ practices of engagement with the electoral system (Topf 1998; Sidney and Nie 1972). Some argue that a continuum of political behaviour exists, as unconventional political activities evolve into conventional forms of political engagement (Conway 2000). Others, such as Harris and Gillion (2010), consider the two forms of political participation as tools that individuals use depending on political objectives, likening the process to a carpenter choosing a specific tool for a particular task. As direct engagement with the political process in the form of voting and joining political parties has waned in many parts of the world, scholars have increasingly shifted their focus to these unconventional modes of political participation (van Deth 2014). However, they rarely consider when and why unconventional and conventional forms of political participation overlap, and in what contexts.

In this paper, we explore the interaction and interrelationship between unconventional and conventional political participation, looking at the experiences of candidates with disability who competed in Indonesia’s 2019 general elections. We begin by outlining the broad scholarly debates around political participation, and specific discussions about people with disability, providing an overview of the wider context of the disability movement, politics and elections in Indonesia. In explaining our approach and method, we draw on data collected through interviews with electoral candidates with disability to describe the motivations, goals and the challenges they faced over the course of the election campaign.

Our analysis reveals that candidates were emboldened to stand for election as a result of their involvement in the disability movement and drew on ideas, networks and other resources from this social movement to undertake their campaigns. These candidates frequently used their campaigns to draw attention to disability concerns. In other words—like other social movement actors in Indonesia who decide to run for office (Caraway and Ford 2020; White and Aspinall 2019)—they used the ‘tool’ of formal political engagement to pursue their social movement objectives within the political system (should they win) while also leveraging the opportunity to raise public awareness about disability concerns. Building on Harris and Gillion’s toolbox model, we

argue that, for marginal groups, the social movements to which they are connected can shape the individual choices they make about the political participation tools they use and how they use them. In this way, we show that conventional and unconventional political tools can interact, and demonstrate that citizens' choices in using these tools are guided by the political goals they are seeking to achieve, their previous experience in political engagement, and by what they perceive is politically possible.

Political participation and people with disability

The concept of political participation, defined as 'citizens' activities affecting politics' (van Deth 2014, 351), provides a framework for thinking about how individuals (as opposed to politicians or other officeholders) can influence political outcomes. In the Global North, scholars of the political behaviour of people with disability often focus on 'conventional' or 'formal' political participation, particularly voting behaviour (Spagnuolo and Shanouda 2017; van Hees, Boeije, and de Putter 2019). They conclude that voting rates are much lower amongst people with disability compared with groups with similar characteristics who do not have a disability (Mattila and Papageorgiou 2017; Shields, Schriener, and Schriener 1998; Teglbaerg et al. 2021), even in countries where legislation has made voting more accessible (Matsubayashi and Ueda 2014). As a result, people with disability are more likely to be politically side-lined (Schur and Adya 2013). Moreover, they tend to face other barriers to formal political participation, such as lower levels of education and employment, stigma from the wider community, and fewer resources and networks to build the necessary relationships with political parties (Waltz and Schippers 2021), meaning they often have less 'political efficacy' compared to rivals (Levesque 2016).

Outside the Global North, scholars have similarly focused on voting when discussing political participation. This work underscores that although the needs of people with disability are more commonly considered by election bodies (Lapuz and Magno 2019) and journalists (Chua 2014), even the existence of legislation that guarantees voting rights does not prevent their marginalisation during elections (Amrullobbi et al. 2020; Ramayah and Sreedharam 2020). Those scholars that do acknowledge the experiences of electoral candidates from the Global South with disability have noted that they face additional burdens from a lack of resources and limited physical accessibility (Sackey 2015; Virendrakumar et al. 2018).

Another body of literature on the political engagement of people with disability focuses on the use of 'unconventional tools' of political participation, such as protest action, lobbying government and other informal mechanisms for affecting positive change for people with disability. Within this literature, there is broad acknowledgement of the key role that collective

movements have played in empowering people to advocate for social and political inclusion. As Shakespeare (1993, 263) explains, 'In making their 'personal troubles' into 'public issues', disabled people are affirming the validity and importance of their own identity.' This approach has played a critical role in generating collective campaigns to improve the day-to-day lives of people with disability (Oliver and Zarb 1989; Scotch 1989; Shakespeare 1993). These discussions largely examine how movements might shape broad-based political struggles around issues of disability from a macro level, with little insight into the way individuals may then translate these collective, 'unconventional,' experiences into more formalised political action (Kitchin and Wilton 2003; Wehbi and El-Lahib 2007).

On occasion, scholars of social movements and political scientists have attempted to explain how being part of a disability movement influences conventional political participation and vice versa. For example, Scotch (1989) explains how in the early days of the disability rights movement in the United States, activists prioritised engagement with national and state government bodies over empowering grassroots actors. Additionally, Aniyamuzaala (2012) has observed that when disability activists were voted into government in Uganda they often struggled to balance their loyalty to the goals of the movement with their obligations as elected representatives of a broader constituency. Furthermore, Schur (1998) demonstrates that having access to limited resources, being disconnected from others with disability and an emphasis on self-help tend to discourage active political participation amongst people with disability—and disabled people's organisations (DPOs) play a key role in the politicisation of people with disability by addressing these issues.

These insights allude to, but do not deeply interrogate, the interaction between conventional and unconventional forms of political participation. Yet, these points of connection are critical for understanding the way that social movements can affect the individual political behaviour of people with disability. Working in the American context, Harris and Gillion (2010, 150) propose a 'toolbox' model as a means of bridging the analytical gap between scholars who focus on conventional political action and those who concentrate on unconventional modes of political engagement. According to this model, a citizen identifies the course of action s/he wishes government to take, then 'decides on the most effective political action that will garner the preferred governmental or societal response, and then deploys this form of political behaviour within a group or by themselves' (Harris and Gillion 2010, 151). This approach is particularly useful for explaining the choices made by marginal groups—who generally 'have fewer resources to engage in the political process than privileged groups, a condition that we argue would affect the deployment of different tools'—because it allows us to understand how 'individuals employ a variety and a combination of

participatory acts to achieve desired political and social goals' (Harris and Gillion 2010, 1,8).

This toolbox model of political participation offers a starting point for considering the relationship between the use of conventional and unconventional political participation tools by people with disability. Disability activists in Indonesia used unconventional tools of political participation to push the Indonesian government to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability (CPRD), and to pass a new national disability law, Law No.8/2016 on People with Disabilities (the disability law) (Dibley 2019). The 2019 election was the first time that a significant number of people with disability decided to engage with the conventional tool of running for public office. Exercising their political rights during the election, including the right to run for office, became a prism through which activists could both draw attention to the ongoing challenges facing people with a disability, and if they were elected, advocate for better implementation of the national disability law through official government channels.

Disability activism and elections in Indonesia

In 2019, some forty people with disability ran for office in the Indonesian general elections. This represented by far the largest number of people with disability contesting the legislative elections, and reflected the fact that since the previous election in 2014 the new disability law, in which the right of people with disability to participate in politics was recognised, had been passed. The law itself, which replaced the strongly criticized Law No. 4/1997 on People with Defects (*Penyandang Cacat*), was a product of the advocacy of the Indonesian disability movement (Afrianty 2020; Edwards 2014). Well-funded national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with a disability focus, peak DPOs and their regional branches, and a range of local DPOs played a central role in both its drafting and passage, and in holding the government to account for its implementation (Afrianty 2020; Dibley 2019; Dibley and Tsaputra 2019a). The momentum created through advocacy for the national disability law fostered a more politically confident community of disability activists across Indonesia, who worked together on a range of activities including lobbying local governments, demonstrations, and national and local awareness raising campaigns (Afrianty 2020; Dibley 2019).

The rights-based approach to disability reflected in the disability law was part of a global movement that culminated around the UN's adoption of the CPRD in 2006. Indonesia was one of the first states to sign the convention in 2007, at the urging of its disability movement (Afrianty 2020). It took almost a decade before the law was passed, but the government was relatively receptive to the input of disability activists, who used a combination of strategies to ensure that it reflected the CPRD's rights-based focus during

the drafting process. These strategies included directly lobbying politicians in person in relation to the law, working collaboratively with other human rights organisations and legal think tanks on developing a draft of the law, writing opinion pieces to support their position in relation to the law and organising public protests to push the government to pass and implement the law (Dibley 2019; Dibley and Tsaputra 2019a).

Their ability to put themselves forward as candidates in 2019 was underwritten by a number of laws that provide a legal basis for people with disability to participate in elections. These included Law No. 39/1999 on Human Rights, which establishes that 'every citizen ... [has] the right to vote and to be voted for in a general election' and Law No. 7/2017 on General Elections (the General Elections Law), which makes specific reference to the right for people with disability to run for office. The disability law itself, meanwhile, affirms the rights of people with disability who fulfil all other criteria to participate in electoral politics. These provisions are further supported elsewhere in the disability law, which also explicitly states that the national and district governments must ensure that people with disability can 'participate effectively and fully in political and public life directly or through a representative' and that the government must 'guarantee the right and opportunity for people with disability to vote and be elected' (article 75). The law goes into further detail on this issue, stating that the government must protect the rights of people with disability to 'run for office, to hold public office, and to execute the functions of that role at all levels of government' (article 77e).

There are also particular nuances to the Indonesian electoral system as it has evolved since 1998, when Indonesia began its transition from authoritarianism to democracy, which offer opportunities for increased political participation. With the move to a more decentralised government and the establishment of provincial and local legislative assemblies, there are simply more opportunities to hold public office (Liddle 2001; Hadiz 2004). In the 2019 election there were over 20,000 seats available in national, provincial, and local legislatures (Bland 2019). In addition, each electorate consists of multiple seats (for example, each voting district in the national legislature elects between three and ten representatives), with the number allocated depending on its population size. If a voting district has, say, ten seats available, political parties do their utmost to field a list of ten candidates in that district. This, in theory, gives one party the opportunity to win all ten seats. Even though the likelihood of doing so is extraordinarily slim, the fact that political parties are able to field multiple candidates in the same district meant that many more individuals could stand for office, including people with disability.

Despite this increased scope for participation and the existence of legal provisions that guarantee the political rights of people with disability, other aspects of the Indonesian political system potentially discriminate against

people with disability who want to enter an electoral race. Most influential is the pivotal role that political parties have in nominating candidates. The Indonesian Constitution stipulates that for a person to be a member of a national, provincial or local legislature, they must be nominated by a political party, which means that the parties determine who gets the opportunity to run (Nursyamsi and Nur Ramadhan 2018). A series of conditions outlined in the General Elections Law could potentially allow a party to reject a potential candidate on the basis that they cannot speak, read or write in Indonesian (which might be the case for someone deaf or mute) or that they are not 'physically and mentally fit' (*sehat jasmani dan rohani*) (Nursyamsi and Nur Ramadhan 2018). The requirement for people to be physically and mentally fit is, ostensibly, to ensure that candidates are able to fulfil their responsibilities, but similar requirements in places like the public sector recruitment process have been used to actively discriminate against people with disability (Dibley and Tsaputra 2019b). More importantly, none of the political parties that contested the 2019 election had an articulated position on how to recruit and/or support candidates with a disability (Nursyamsi and Nur Ramadhan 2018). This lack of disability awareness among Indonesian political parties meant that candidates with disability had to drive their own electioneering. For this, they leveraged the existing networks they had developed through their engagement in the disability rights movement, melding the worlds of activism and elections in the process.

Approach and method

This article draws from data collected in June 2019, approximately two months after the general elections were held. We first used our existing networks and snowballing techniques to identify individuals with a disability who were competing in the 2019 general election on a disability rights platform. Through this process, we identified 40 individuals nation-wide. Of these, 24 (60 percent) agreed to participate in our study, including five candidates running at the national level, seven running at the provincial level, and 12 at the local level of parliament (see Table 1). The candidates were competing in 11 different provinces.

In addition to some independent disability activists, the interviewees included members of the Association of Indonesian Disabled Persons (PPDI), the Indonesian Muslim Association for the Blind (ITMI), the Christian Physical Disability Association (PERSANI), the Movement for Disability Indonesia (Disabilitas BERGERAK), Creative Disability Indonesia (DKI), the Indonesia Women with Disabilities Association (HWDI), the Center for Improving Qualified Activity in the Lives of People with Disabilities (CIQAL), *It starts with us* (Mulaidarikita), and the Indonesia Paralympic Committee. Five participants held leadership positions within disabled people's organisations,



Table 1. Interviewees by political party, level, gender, region, previous electoral experience and involvement in disability movement.

Party	Level	Gender	Region	Previous Electoral Experience	Involvement in the Disability Movement
Democratic Party (Partai Demokrat)	Local	M	Jakarta	Yes	Member of DPO
Democratic Party (Partai Demokrat)	Provincial	M	Central Java	Yes	Member of DPO
Democratic Party (Partai Demokrat)	Provincial	F	West Java	No	Member of DPO
Democratic Party (Partai Demokrat)	National	F	Central Java	No	Independent disability activist
Garuda Party (Partai Garuda)	Provincial	F	East Nusa Tenggara	No	Member of DPO
Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)	Provincial	M	West Java	No	Independent disability activist
People's Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP)	Local	M	South Sulawesi	No	DPO leader
People's Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP)	Local	M	West Papua	No	Independent disability activist
Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra)	Local	M	South Sulawesi	No	Member of DPO
National Democratic Party (Nasdem)	National	F	Yogyakarta	No	Leader of non-profit disability organisation
National Democratic Party (Nasdem)	National	F	Jakarta	Yes	Independent disability activist
Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI)	Local	M	South Sulawesi	Yes	Member of DPO
Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI)	Local	M	South Sulawesi	No	DPO leader
Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI)	Local	F	Yogyakarta	No	Member of non-profit disability organisation
Indonesian Unity Party (PERINDO)	Local	M	Papua	Yes	DPO leader
Indonesian Unity Party (PERINDO)	Local	M	Central Java	Yes	Member of DPO
Indonesian Unity Party (PERINDO)	Provincial	M	West Java	No	Leader of disability network
Indonesian Unity Party (PERINDO)	Provincial	M	West Kalimantan	Yes	Independent disability activist
Indonesian Unity Party (PERINDO)	Provincial	F	East Kalimantan	Yes	DPO leader
National Mandate Party (PAN)	National	F	Jakarta	No	Leader of non-profit disability organisation
National Mandate Party (PAN)	Local	M	Aceh	Yes	DPO leader
People's Conscience Party (Hanura)	Local	M	South Sulawesi	Yes	Member of DPO
United Development Party (PPP)	Local	M	East Nusa Tenggara	Yes	Regional head of national disability related government committee
Functional Parties Group (Golkar)	National	M	West Java	Yes	Independent disability activist/ entrepreneur
The Working Party (Berkarya)	Local	M	West Java	No	

*Denotes an interviewee who has been active within the disability movement but does not currently consider themselves a member of a particular organisation.

three held leadership positions within networks or organisations with a focus on disability, and one held a leadership position within a government agency focused on disability. Nine participants were members of either DPOs or other non-profit disability organisations and six participants were active within the disability movement but did not currently consider themselves a member of a particular organisation (referred to as 'independent disability activist').

These candidates represented a wide range of political parties, competing for 13 of the 20 parties that contested the 2019 election. This included some large, well-established parties, such as the People's Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) and Functional Groups Party (Golkar), and new parties such as the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI), Indonesian Unity Party (PERINDO), Garuda Party, and the Working Party (Berkarya). The broad spectrum of political parties that nominated candidates with a disability reflects the fact that no one party had a monopoly on attracting candidates with disability.

We conducted semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately one hour, with 23 respondents and received written responses from one. Of these 16 participants were men and eight were women. During the interviews, which were conducted by telephone, participants were asked a range of open-ended questions pertaining to their previous political experience, motivations for entering the electoral race, aspirations for their campaign, resources they accessed, challenges they experienced, and their reflections on the outcomes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, then entered, along with the two written responses, into a qualitative data analysis program (NVIVO). We initially analysed the data using a thematic coding system. We repeated the coding process as additional themes emerged.

This paper focuses on our four main coding nodes and a series of sub-nodes. The first of these nodes—'motivations'—encompassed sub-nodes that captured key reasons candidates decided to run for office (for example, to demonstrate competency of people with disabilities, raise awareness of disability and other advocacy goals, and as a means of representing people with disability in politics). The second node, 'political participation and activism', included sub-nodes about how candidates used political participation to further their activism. The node on 'resources' was divided into sub-nodes on funding and in-kind support, and the node on 'challenges' encompassed the key challenges raised by candidates, namely accessibility, costs, voter acceptance and money politics.

Identifying key thematic sub-nodes and noting the frequency of mentions allowed us to build an overall narrative about the common experiences of candidates with a disability. The results of this analysis highlight how closely intertwined the candidates' goals for the disability movement are with their personal campaign goals, thereby offering a platform for thinking further

about the relationship between conventional and unconventional political participation.

The election experience

Candidates' reasons for running and the strategies they used over the course of their electoral campaigns were demonstrably shaped by their prior involvement in the disability movement. Candidates interviewed came from 11 different provinces from across Indonesia, demonstrating that the drive for people with disability to engage in politics was nationwide, not concentrated around a particular geographic area. All of the candidates we interviewed were either members of disabled people's organisations or had engaged in some form of disability activism prior to running for office. Many of them were energetic DPO leaders who had lobbied government at all levels to promote disability rights. However, only eight of the 25 had prior experience with formal politics through competing in a legislative election. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the majority drew primarily on the knowledge, skills and networks they had cultivated through their unconventional political participation when running for office.

Motivations for candidacy

All candidates were emboldened by support from their local disability community organisations to enter the electoral race. As such, the candidates saw themselves as both individuals who wanted to become politicians and representatives of the broader disability movement. As a PERINDO candidate in West Java, who was also the head of a local DPO, explained, he was encouraged to run by members of his DPO, to represent people with disability all over Indonesia—and his colleagues then became his campaign team. The Garuda Party candidate, who was also a member of PERSANI, recalls discussing her candidacy with other members of her DPO and deciding, together, that she would be 'their' candidate because no one else from her organisation was 'brave' enough to run.

The candidates' decisions to run for public office was partly a manifestation of frustration with the government's approach to social inclusion for people with disability and lax enforcement of the new disability law. Sustained campaigning by DPOs had resulted in policy changes in some more progressive parts of the country. For example, in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, a local regulation on Persons with Disability was passed in 2012 and implemented in 2014 as a result of local advocacy for recognition of the rights and needs of people with disability in the province (Yulianti 2020). But, in spite of these scattered accomplishments, progress was slower than disability activists had hoped. One Democratic Party candidate from Central Java lamented the hard work that had gone into advocating for the disability

law, saying that he was worried it was being 'put away in a closet,' because the national government was not doing enough to ensure its full implementation. If successful, the candidate believed that they could use their new platform to advocate for a more complete roll-out of the law. A Papuan candidate for PERINDO explained that his participation in formal politics was fuelled by his goal to raise awareness of disability issues amongst people within government: 'First, we want to campaign for disability rights, because those rights have to be in accordance with the law ... [if we are voted in] we will act as a bridge to connect people in the government to issues of disability.'

The sluggish implementation of the national disability law was regularly linked to the fact that people with disability were not represented in the government. As a candidate from Central Java running for Nasdem argued: 'if the fight for people with disability doesn't include [direct involvement] in political institutions then nothing will change.' Another candidate in West Java representing PKS described the current group of legislative representatives in her district as 'not easy to provoke [into action]' to assist people with disability, while also being full of 'lots of different characters,' making it complicated and time consuming to lobby all the necessary decision-makers in order to enact pro-disability policies. For this reason, she stated that she 'wanted to be on the inside to ... change their patterns of thinking and their paradigms [about disability] from within.' In South Sulawesi, another interviewee stated that community efforts to lobby the local government to implement regulations to assist people had thus far failed and he took the 'initiative to nominate himself so that there was someone who could oversee these efforts from within.'

Candidates hoped that, in securing a parliamentary position, they could inject a disability perspective into official decision-making. Having a voice within these institutions could further the movement's agenda directly without having to rely on allies within the legislature to act as proxies for their concerns. However, electoral victory was not the sole objective of their campaigns. In justifying their candidacy, all our participants cited a desire to advocate for disability issues through the campaign itself. Many understood that although their prospects of winning were not high, the election campaign was an opportunity to educate voters about disability concerns. The candidate from Aceh highlighted the importance of this awareness raising, particularly because many people in broader society understood disability in very simplistic terms and doubted the capacity of people with disability: 'it's difficult with regular people ... they have low expectations of people with disability ... during my campaign some people were shocked, asking 'is it even possible for someone with a disability to become a legislator?' Another interviewee from the Nasdem Party in Yogyakarta talked about how she hoped to challenge 'old paradigms' of people with disability

as 'charity cases' by demonstrating her own capabilities through her campaign, while a Central Java candidate for the Democratic Party asserted that it was an opportunity to establish that people with disability had the same political rights as other citizens.

The election campaign also provided a platform for increasing the number of stakeholders invested in disability rights, with Yogyakarta's Nasdem candidate offering that 'we have to genuinely work together and build networks with lots of people, in this case political parties, as a stakeholder involved in these [disability] policies...when lots of people join our disabled friends in the struggle to talk about disability rights, the push will definitely be stronger.' Through talking to constituents, community meetings, and involvement in political parties, candidates hoped to demonstrate that they were not only capable of mounting an electoral campaign, but to also gather support for disability-rights more generally. From a political participation perspective, this was illustrative of candidates' goals to use the election process as a tool for both gaining entry into government and expanding awareness of the disability-rights movement amongst the general public. Importantly, this dual purpose provided candidates with additional motivation to campaign despite the challenges they faced.

Negotiating the limits of conventional politics

While their experience in unconventional politics shaped why and how candidates with disability approached their electoral campaigns, the obstacles they faced also offer insight into the relationship between conventional and unconventional political tools. The key challenges that people with disability faced in the 2019 election related to physical access during campaigning, social stigma, the costs of campaigning, and the ubiquity of voter bribery (often referred to in Indonesia as 'money politics'). Cognizant of the physical effort involved in mounting an electoral campaign and the time, funds, and human resources required to do so effectively, community backing was crucial for active engagement with constituents. The extent to which candidates could face these challenges depended heavily on backing from their DPOs and their individual access to resources.

Thirteen interviewees identified physical barriers as a key challenge limiting their campaigns. Obstacles included difficulty in negotiating roads and walkways (especially in rural areas), getting into and out of buildings, and the physically demanding nature of campaigning and visiting different areas of the electoral district. A Nasdem candidate from Jakarta surmised that:

I can really understand that for friends who are physically challenged or deaf, the physical constraints [of campaigning] are real ... Because buildings in Indonesia, especially in [rural] areas, are not disability friendly. Maybe in Jakarta there are many accessible buildings but in the regions there are very few.

Another interviewee competing in East Kalimantan described her experience of needing friends from her DPO to accompany her as she travelled, to lift her wheelchair over uneven terrain. While she was fortunate to have such assistance, it would certainly have limited her campaign if she did not. Another wheelchair user, competing in East Nusa Tenggara for the Garuda Party, needed her eldest child to help her negotiate stairs when she visited government buildings because most did not have ramps or elevators. During these visits, she also encountered government officials who would 'talk down to her,' implying that 'if I can't even walk, how can I be a legislative candidate?' According to a Democratic Party candidate in West Java, the extra effort required for planning, and resources to simply move through the electoral district during a campaign, made it 'exhausting' and required 'much more effort than "normal" candidates.' She concluded that if she was not also using the campaign to promote disability rights then she would not have exerted so much effort. The limitations this posed for campaigning to a larger group of voters, a PDIP candidate in South Sulawesi contended, undermined their prospects because they were not able to promote themselves as widely as their competitors, thus resulting in 'being left behind' when the ballots were cast.

Social stigma was another key obstacle. Fourteen of our participants identified voter attitudes as a key barrier to their election, asserting that the public did not consider people with disability as serious candidates; believed that having a disability would seriously undermine their ability to be a good legislative representative; or did not understand that physical capacity does not affect candidates' ability to perform official duties. The PAN candidate from East Java observed the struggle to overcome negative perceptions of disability and 'convince non-disabled people that we have the ability to sit in the legislature.' Candidates had to contend with prevalent conceptions of people with disabilities as 'crippled' (referred to in Indonesian as *cacat*). As the Democratic Party candidate from West Java explained, these 'unreasonable' views reflected embedded negative perceptions of disability. Papua's PERINDO candidate outlined that, despite their best efforts throughout the campaign, many still have 'negative ideas' about people with disabilities and questioned whether they 'have the capacity' to be politicians. This is a 'huge challenge for people with disabilities as [people think]... it would be better if they stayed home and were looked after.' In another interview, PERINDO's West Java candidate described being asked by voters whether he could 'even go on an airplane' given his disability, suggesting that if he was elected, he would have difficulty travelling to official meetings. In the face of these assumptions, candidates with a disability had to work harder to win the support of the general population. As the West Java Democratic Party candidate summarised: "'normal' people still don't accept us ... so it's very important to show we are credible, capable, and honest candidates.'

The third major obstacle encountered by our participants was the cost of campaigning. Running an electoral campaign in Indonesia, as in many other parts of the world, is an expensive endeavour. Some candidates received merchandise from their political party to help them campaign (including banners, posters, and stickers to distribute amongst voters) but this was not sufficient to mount a serious campaign. Only one candidate, the Democratic Party candidate from Central Java, reported receiving Rp 2.5million (approximately USD250) as a financial contribution from their party. One West Java candidate reported that mounting a banner in his electoral district for a month cost Rp 8 million (approximately USD 562)—no small sum in a province where the minimum monthly wage for 2019 was Rp 3,623,778.91 (approximately USD 256). This figure is the 2020 rate for the city of Bandung, where this candidate resided (see West Java Provincial Government 2020). Furthermore, travelling through the electoral district, hosting events, and payments to the campaign team presented additional expenses. Two respondents, from West Java and East Nusa Tenggara, reported that their lack of financial resources severely limited their ability to actively campaign in person and, as a result, they had to focus predominantly on gaining the support through their existing networks of disability activists, rather than being able to campaign to the wider community.

‘Money politics’—the term commonly used to refer to vote-buying through transactions of cash, goods, or funding public works in order to influence voters’ decisions—was another key campaign obstacle identified by candidates with disabilities. It is important to note that problems associated with ‘money politics’ are ubiquitous for all candidates running for office in Indonesia (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019; Davidson, Hicken, and Meredith Project Weiss 2017; Muhtadi 2019). Many interviewees complained of the difficulty in competing with rivals who had more money and resources to influence voters and complained of being unable to counter this through their focus on disability issues. All candidates reported being frustrated because voters were so influenced by money (mostly referring to cash payments to voters), with a general sentiment that voters were heavily inclined to vote for the candidate who offered the most financial benefit. One candidate, in Papua, relayed that there were villages in his electorate that told candidates they could not even enter to campaign if they did not have money to give them. Other candidates said that people they thought would vote for them ended up changing their votes at the last minute because another candidate offered them money. The feeling of frustration was summarised by the West Java candidate for Berkarya Party, who lamented: ‘that’s the Indonesian public... they still choose money over those who are genuinely trying to change society ... it’s hard for candidates [like us] ... politics is cruel.’

Candidates’ limited resources meant that their campaign strategies were shaped by their past involvement in informal political participation and

activism for disability rights. Consequently, candidates with disabilities used the advocacy skills and social networks that they developed through lobbying for rights with the disability movement in their electoral campaign. These candidates had the support of other people with disability and their local allies in conducting activities such as campaign planning, designing banners and flyers, producing online media content, logistics and organizing electioneering schedules. For example, the PKS candidate from West Java mentioned that he received significant support from his DPO colleagues, who managed his social media efforts, wrote him a campaign song and created short videos to promote his campaign. At the same time, the tenacity with which many candidates continued their campaigns in the face of potential failure fuelled their desire to leverage the campaigns for awareness-raising purposes and as experiences that they could use to improve future campaigns. As Yogyakarta's Nasdem candidate asserted, she learned 'many things' through her involvement in the election and felt it was 'good [to have the experience] so we can evaluate and improve for next time,' despite some disheartening aspects to the election.

Finding the points of connection

We set out to investigate the points of connection between conventional and unconventional politics in order to better understand how people with disability engage with politics. The experiences of the disability activists who ran for office in Indonesia's 2019 general elections demonstrate how participation in unconventional politics supported the engagement of people with disability in conventional politics. As the discussion above has revealed, candidates with disability drew directly on their activist experience and networks to run their campaigns. They also used their campaigns to pursue their goal of raising awareness and mainstreaming disability amongst the general population.

In essence, candidates with disability identified three key motivations for running for office that were directly influenced by their engagement with the unconventional political tools they mobilised to advance the broader disability movement. First, they were bolstered by the development of a movement that had placed, through 'informal' political participation, sufficient pressure on the government to pass a national disability law that guaranteed a host of rights. In coming together to advocate for the law, DPOs around Indonesia became more active and attracted more members. The networks, knowledge and skills developed through this process contributed to the enthusiasm with which several people with disability decided to compete in the 2019 elections. Indeed, running for office was, for many disability activists, an extension of several years of advocacy work. Second, with the slow implementation of the national disability law, candidates with disability

saw an opportunity to use formal political processes to drive their agenda from within the system, rather than from the outside. Third, candidates with disability also recognised the opportunity of electoral campaigning as a mechanism for further informal political participation and to talk to citizens to raise awareness about the range of skills and perspectives that candidates with a disability offer. It was a means for challenging negative social perceptions of people with disability as requiring charity and sympathy, with candidates using the opportunity to demonstrate that disability was not a limitation to becoming a political representative for their constituents.

The challenges that these candidates faced in running for office reflected the limits of what they could achieve with conventional political participation tools. The challenges of campaign costs and money politics in Indonesia are not unique to candidates with disability; however, the challenges with physical access and stigma are. These barriers point to structural problems within the electoral system, and within Indonesian society more broadly. In the context of these challenges, candidates were ambitious, but realistic in their goals. Many understood that victory would be difficult. By conceptualising the electoral campaign as an extension of their previous (unconventional) advocacy efforts, candidates with disability were able to give meaning to an experience that might otherwise be very disheartening. Several candidates offered an optimistic assessment of the experience. As the PSI candidate in Yogyakarta offered, it was not simply about winning: ‘we could talk about the struggles of people with disability, but we could also help people understand how we share many of the same struggles ... being poor, feeling powerless ... these aren’t just the experiences of people with disability, lots of people have these experiences. So, we can push them to work with us to address them together.’ If candidates had used this tool solely for its ‘intended’ purposes—winning public office—they may not have been able to rationalise expending their energy.

The approach taken by the candidates with disability in Indonesia offers insight into the political behaviour of a marginalised group that enriches Harris and Gillion (2010, 153) toolbox model. Importantly, the experience of Indonesian candidates with disability illustrates the critical role that context plays in the decisions around which political tool citizens take up. According to the toolbox model, citizens ‘select the most appropriate political tool’ to capitalise on political opportunities (Harris and Gillion 2010, 153). This approach assumes that all political tools are available to all citizens to use at any time and that citizens have the capacity to use these political tools for their intended purposes. Our research demonstrates that this is not always the case. In 2014, the legislative and regulatory landscape in Indonesia had been less supportive for electoral candidates with disability. The passing of the national disability law in 2016 reinforced statements made in other regulations about the legal basis for people with disability to run for office.

This meant that people with disability had only just been guaranteed access to this particular formal tool for political participation in 2019. The tool of running for office, as a springboard for entering parliament, was limited by the structural issues within the electoral system. But, despite these limitations, it remained logical for people with disability to use the platform offered by running for office to execute other strategies of the disability movement, namely promoting disability rights and equality in more general terms.

Conclusion

The political behaviour of the candidates with disability in the 2019 election in Indonesia demonstrates how conventional and unconventional political tools interact and cannot always be considered distinct from one another. Harris and Gillion (2010, 152) argue that their model offers a framework for moving beyond 'placing individuals into categories of action, where individuals collectively fit some participation profile,' and instead views individuals as each having access to their 'own toolbox that includes institutionalised and extra-institutionalised tactics.' Our case study enhances their approach by demonstrating that individuals' previous experience with political tools and the context they are in when they make their decision to engage with the political process can shape which tools they choose and how they use them. This choice then influences their operating context and shapes their subsequent political choices.

The significance of these findings has bearing for others seeking to understand the political behaviour of people with disability. By showing how individual candidates with disability have leveraged conventional and unconventional political tools in their pursuit for public office, we demonstrate that the dynamics of the disability movement can have as much of an influence on the political participation of people with disability as improvements to accessibility, public perceptions of disability and access to resources. Importantly, our findings show that disability movements can affect the engagement with a particular form of conventional political participation—competing in general elections—by people with a disability through its contribution to organizing supporters and building skills and networks to support people with a disability who are interested in participating in formal politics.

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There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

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