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Language and Power: How Democracy and Pluralism Shape Patterns of Minority Political Representation in Bali, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to portray the political representation of minorities using discourse analysis as a tool to analyse the 2019 legislative election in Bali province. Bali is a province with the largest Hindu population in Indonesia. It is necessary for minority groups to take strategic steps to express their participation and existence in political contestation. The power of language and the strength of minority political candidates have led to successful competition for seats in the legislature. The ethnically and religiously heterogeneous electorate sympathized with the candidate. Using a linguistic semiotic approach, the analysis results are obtained, and the use of language as a representation of Muslim power is aimed at the diction of “*Khadimul Ummah*”, or servant of the public. While this study uses a qualitative approach to semiotic analysis, the diction of servant of the public is interpreted using a binary opposition approach. The results of this study show that language creates its identity and becomes a figure of interest to the Balinese people as a representation of Indonesian legislative members in the electoral district of Bali. For most people in Bali, there is a belief that this diction is something that strengthens inter-religious harmony between societies. The significance of this study lies in the fact that language may have symbolic power for both ethnic minority and majority groups.

Keywords: discourse; representation; muslim minority; election; Bali



Citation: Sofyan, Nur, Naili Farida, Rina Martini, and Dewi Erowati. 2023. Language and Power: How Democracy and Pluralism Shape Patterns of Minority Political Representation in Bali, Indonesia. *Social Sciences* 12: 657. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12120657>

Academic Editor: David F. J. Campbell

Received: 1 September 2023

Revised: 5 November 2023

Accepted: 20 November 2023

Published: 27 November 2023



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1. Introduction

The Republic of Indonesia is a country with the world's largest Muslim population, and more than 85 percent of Indonesia's population of 258 million are Muslim (Abdelhadi and O'brien 2020; Baysu and Swyngedouw 2020). However, there are several areas in Indonesia where the Muslim community is an ethnic minority community (van Prooijen et al. 2018). One of the provinces with a Muslim minority population is the province of Bali, where the majority of the people in this province are Hindus, amounting to 3,247,283 people (Sofyan et al. 2023; van Prooijen et al. 2018). A total of 520,244 people live in 9 regencies/towns in Bali province, including Jembrana, Tabanan, Badung, Gianyar, Klungkung, Bangli, Karangasem, Buleleng and Denpasar (Sofyan et al. 2023). Jembrana Regency and Denpasar City are the two regions with the highest number of Muslims in Bali, up to 225,899 (Sofyan et al. 2023). The presence of Muslims in the province of Bali is certainly a colouring and enrichment of knowledge and religious tolerance in the province of Bali itself.

This number of Muslims in the province of Bali certainly has an impact on the representation of seats in the House of Representatives (DPR-RI) or the Regional Representatives Council (DPD-RI) at the district, provincial and central levels (McGraw 2009). In the 2019 legislative elections, a Muslim candidate was in the running for representation of the Muslim community in Bali province. The phenomenon of an ethnic minority standing out

in the hustle and bustle of competition with the ethnic majority is a unique one to be observed in the study of political communication (Martinovic and Verkuyten 2014; Verkuyten 2010). This is shown in the contest for seats in the *DPD RI* in Bali Province. Based on the results of the recapitulation of valid votes by the General Elections Commission (*KPU*), four *DPD-RI* candidates have been elected in the Bali constituency in accordance with the general election of the Republic of Indonesia (see Figure 1).

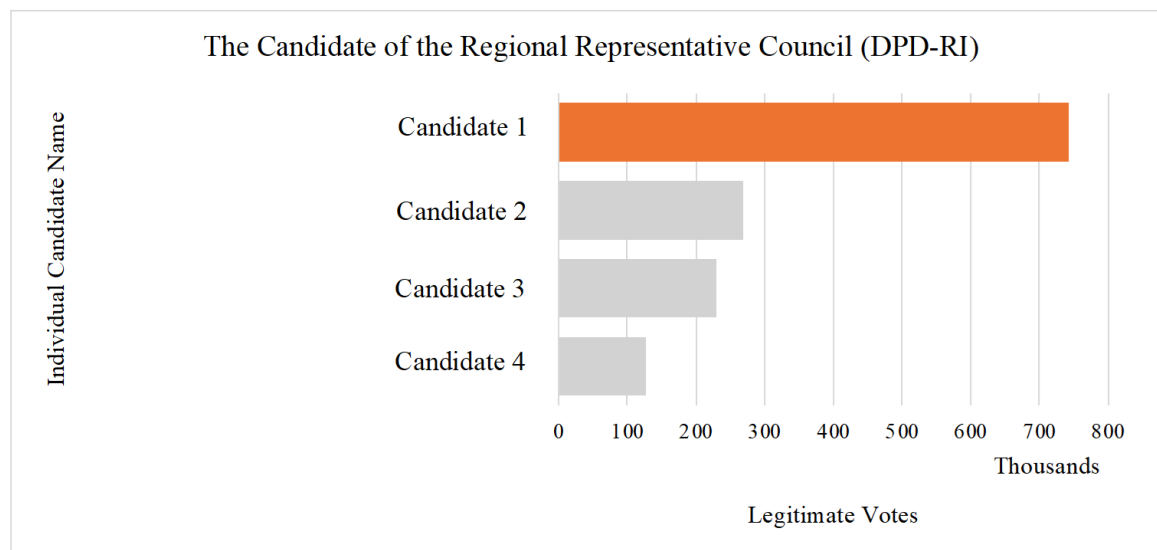


Figure 1. The general election in terms of votes for *DPD-RI* provincial candidates. Source: (Komisi Pemilihan Umum 2021).

In the result of the *DPD-RI* election, Candidate 4 won the election as the representative of the Muslim minority group, it is a proof that his political communication strategy has received a positive response from the voters. Amidst fierce competition from other candidates, the election of Candidate 4 in the 2019 *DPD-RI* election became the history of *DPD-RI* elections in Bali Province.

The representation of minorities will be difficult without the help of language as a medium to support the ongoing process of representation. In the past, language has been used as a differentiating factor in power relations (Martinovic and Verkuyten 2014; Verkuyten 2010). Also, in any social relationship, the main goal is to get elected and to obtain votes (Ahmed 2020; Tremblay et al. 2018). Researchers understand the use of language as a symbol as well as an effort to reach a power that is part of the political communication strategy (Creese 2019; McGraw 2009). Moreover, language is also used as a regulator of politeness and political thought, which at least becomes a study worthy of research (Reuter 2009; Sofyan et al. 2023). In the context of political communication, the implementation of language and the meaning of language construction conveyed by Candidate 4 are studied in an effort to show the presence of the Muslim minority during the hegemony of the Hindu majority in the 2019 general election.

In addition, this study aimed to produce a constructive understanding of the use of language to show the existence and representation of the Islamic minority by Candidate 4 to gain support in the 2019 Bali provincial *DPD RI* election. The findings can provide a reference for political communication strategies with political representation of Muslim ethnic minorities in Bali, which can later be adapted to other provinces in Indonesia. This research can also add empirical insights to the socio-political field, especially political communication.

2. Materials and Methods

This research is a development of previous existing research related to research on language as a symbol to maintain power. See Table 1 for some of the previous studies included.

Table 1. Previous research in relation to discourse analysis.

Researcher	Title	Results
1 (Lee 2013)	‘Bourdieu’s symbolic power and postcolonial organization theory in local–expatriate relationships: An ethnographic study of a French multinational corporation in Singapore’	Describes the leadership practices that occur in French multi-national companies in Singapore. This practice is viewed from the symbolic interaction in Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic power and postcolonial theory of organization. In addition, this finding also explains the differences in the values that are believed, so that it affects the assertiveness practice shown by local and expatriate managers.
2 (Sofyan et al. 2023)	Political Marketing of Muslim Minority Candidates in the Bali Legislative Election	Explaining the use of language by world leaders as a tool to legitimize power’. This can be seen through a series of texts in the speeches poured through their ideas on the outstanding issues. For example, the language in Javanese ethnicity is used as a differentiator against the social strata of society.
3 (Abadi et al. 2016)	<i>‘Bentuk Hegemoni Kekuasaan dalam Tuturan ‘Jokowi’</i>	This research explains the use of language as an effort to see the inequality that occurs in society. This study uses a critical discourse analysis approach that focuses on using language as a means of achieving power. This research comes from transcripts published on television when Jokowi served as Governor of DKI Jakarta and President. The discourse constructed through the speech was seen in his response to the Jakarta floods, traffic jams, and the Jakarta Health Card (KJS).
4 (Obeng 2019)	‘Grammatical Pragmatics: Language, Power and Liberty in Ghanaian Political Discourse’	Explains the relationship between language, power, and freedom. Reviews the use of two letters written by Joseph Boakye Danquah in opposition to Ghana addressed to the President of Ghana Nkrumah. This letter contains efforts to criticize the government, seek the protection of freedom, and challenge the policies of the President. The use of language in the letter is viewed from words that intend to convey views on freedom.
5 (Morand 2000)	‘Language and Power: An Empirical Analysis of Linguistic Strategies Used in Superior–Subordinate Communication’	The results of this study present strengths that are communicated through the language used between superiors and subordinates. This article uses a qualitative approach by reviewing the theory of ‘politeness’ in influencing tactics, communication distortions in hierarchical relationships, and egalitarianism.
6 (Wright et al. 2001)	Language and Power in Japanese Transplants in Scotland’	Explains the cross-cultural communication that occurs between Japanese and local employees in Scotland. Bourdieu’s theory in this study shows the relationship between the Japanese language and culture used by Japanese expatriates in communicating with local employees in Scotland. This study also seeks to criticize previous findings that assume that the communication process is not problematic.

Previous research on language representation has not discussed how it relates to political communication strategy, particularly in the context of language as a representation of the Muslim ethnic minority in Bali (Fox 2013; Wright et al. 2001). Departing from various previous studies, this research discusses and contributes to the latest research with discussions related to language as political representation of Muslim ethnic minorities in Bali.

In addition, this study aims to obtain answers related to a constructive understanding of the use of discourse analysis as a tool to analyse the existence and representation of representatives of the Islamic minority by Candidate 4 to gain support for the 2019 Bali

Province DPD RI election. This political event is not unusual in the province of Bali, an area with a majority embracing Hinduism. From the perspective of political communication, it has a unique feature; the election of DPD RI with an Islamic background is proof of a history of political communication where Muslim figures can be accepted in the province of Bali.

A qualitative approach is used in this study. Qualitative researchers emphasise the socially constructed nature of reality, the close relationship between the researcher and the object of study, and the tensions of the situation that shape the research (Denzim and Lincoln 2009a). Such researchers emphasise the value-laden nature of the inquiry. They seek answers to questions that reveal how social sites are created and what they mean (Denzim and Lincoln 2009b). Based on the above theory, this qualitative research aims to reveal the phenomenon of a series of dramatizations of the use of language as a political representation of the Muslim ethnic minority in Bali.

This research study uses data collection techniques including document studies (YouTube videos) and in-depth interviews with the research subject, namely the Balinese Muslim community leader and the chairman of the Muhammadiyah organization in the province of Bali. The data analysis technique is carried out using semiotic analysis. Meanwhile, the semiotic method that guides the analysis of this research is semiotics. The definition of semiotics is a science that studies the life of signs in society. The aim is to show how signs are formed and the rules that govern them (Sofyan et al. 2023; Verkuyten 2010). The validity of the data is tested using source triangulation techniques. Also, secondary data were obtained from journals, books, and previous research. The researchers also used data analysis techniques that included data presentation, data reduction, and drawing conclusions.

3. Results

3.1. *Language as Symbolic Power*

The existence of Islam can be found in almost all areas of Bali. In this case, the presence of Muslims has given its own colour and enriched the Islamic–Hindu discourse in Bali. In this discussion, it is important to analyse the application of language as a tool that shapes the political representation of minorities in Bali, including building and maintaining its Islamic identity amidst the Hindu majority.

The success of Candidate 4 in the DPD-RI general election is closely linked to religious factors, candidate power and mass mobilisation. Although the condition of a multicultural society sometimes makes democracy in Bali-Indonesia inseparable from identity politics. However, Bali's increasingly open conditions provide opportunities for political actors from different backgrounds with ideological, political, and economic interests to interact, negotiate or even compete for political seats. It is considered as up-to-date perspective of democracy and quality of democracy (Campbell 2019). In a more harmonious context, the relationship between Muslims and Hindus has been good for centuries. Another condition is also shown through various political moments that Muslim identity in Bali is constructed from the process of ethnic, religious, occupational, and cultural crossover between indigenous Muslims and urban migrants who are integrated in primordial ties, such as ethnicity, religion, neighbourhood, emotional closeness, culture, and intermarriage (Creese 2019). However, there are a number of factors that ultimately determine how Balinese people choose and elect Muslim minority candidates as described, namely political communication, figure (track record) and interest accommodation.

The diction of '*Khadimul Ummah*', or the servant of the public was the main message of Candidate 4 in the political campaign for the 2019 general election. Symbolic power makes people see, believe, confirm, or change their view, thus constructing what is given through the utterances that act on the world to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained. It is an almost magical power, which can only be a power (physical or economic) if it is perceived as arbitrary (*reconnu*), that is, misperceived (*méconnu*), due to the particular effect of mobilisation. It is a power that can be exercised (Harnish 2021). It is the belief in words

and the legitimacy of those who speak to them that creates the power of words and slogans to maintain or destroy the social order. Moreover, words alone cannot create this belief (Bourdieu 1986; Sandal 2019). Furthermore, the form of tolerance between Balinese Hindus and Muslims is something that grows culturally and does not prioritise coercion and intimidation, so that support for Muslim candidates is something that is never questioned by most non-Muslim communities in Bali.

In this case, '*Khadimul Ummah*' is a language whose symbolic power represents the Muslim minority in Bali and illustrates that language can be used to represent Muslim minorities in political competition. In a political competition where the minority faces the majority, an opposition is needed that can bridge the needs and interests of the majority. One of the efforts that can bridge the interests of the majority and at the same time represent the minority is to use the diction of '*Khadimul Ummah*' to serve the people. When Bourdieu speaks of symbolic power, he is speaking of a power that is only able to perform the function that is recognised as legitimate by both parties (Bourdieu 1986; Sandal 2019).

In the case of Candidate 4, the Muslim minority chooses the diction to serve the people with guidance on efforts to embrace and become a form of sense of belonging where the minority and the majority can go hand in hand, especially in the context of political democracy in Indonesia itself. Thus, when this Muslim minority uses the diction of "*Khadimul Ummah*" to serve the people, it is also a servant of the majority and a servant of the minority (Othman 2006). So, in this context, it can be associated with efforts to enter the realm of Balinese society in general. This diction of the public servants was very attractive to the sympathy of the Balinese people. If the minority leader comes from the Muslim minority, he can also embrace the interests of the Hindu majority so that there is no friction between the minority and the majority in social construction (Dahl 2008; Othman 2006; Suebvises 2018).

The diction of serving the people is the diction of bridging, even though it is a binary opposition. The opponent of the servant is the employer, so the effort to see the minority have the ability to serve is emphasised in language as a symbolic power for the Muslim minority. Furthermore, this is driven by Candidate 4's desire to always make the best possible contribution, especially in the context of Balinese society. Moreover, in every video lecture or interview (YouTube), Candidate 4 always emphasises that he is someone who grew up in Bali, that he understands Balinese culture, and that he understands how to treat Balinese people even though they have different beliefs but can still consolidate well in their lives on efforts to serve the people in general.

"... The motivation was how to serve the people with maximum service, because for me the leader was *Khadimul Ummah*, the servant of the people, and that was the initial motivation. Be it the social welfare or even the Da'wah practices. The main key is that we always provide knowledge..." (Candidate 4, 2021).

Candidate 4 clearly stated that he wanted to provide public service to the Balinese people. Representatives not only represent themselves, but also larger entities than individuals, for example, by talking about people's regional or ethnic identities as indicated by indicators and criteria such as language, dialect, and accent. The people of Bali viewed the diction used by Candidate 4 as something that was believed to strengthen inter-religious harmony.

3.2. Politics Representation as Delegation

One way of looking at symbolic representation is to use Hanks and Bourdieu's sense of representation as delegation. In a region where most of the people are Hindus, the Muslim minority choose their political candidates who can represent their ethnicity. Their political candidates can not only stand for themselves, but also speak for entities larger than themselves.

"... *Khadimul Ummah*" is a servant of the people; yes, the term is well socialized, and it is not only Muslims who must be served, so whoever is in Bali must provide services. So, it must be fought for when there is an aspiration or desire. Candidate 4 also did that, and it can be proven by the communications that were already built not only for the

benefit of Muslims but also the people of Bali in general. In my opinion, all agencies and mass organizations must have the principle of *khadimul ummah* and must serve each other (Muhammadiyah Organization 2022).

Those statements prove that minorities can also be political representatives both for their and other ethnic groups. The particular relations of communication and language are always indivisible, especially a symbolic power accumulated by the people themselves. Populist politicians are just an extreme case of representative delegates who speak on behalf of the people and actively build up the people to speak on their behalf. In the case of representative democracy, the people are both the voters to whom they speak and the audience to which they speak.

In this case, minority participation in electoral contestation indicates an improvement in the quality of democracy in Indonesia. Based on data, indicators related to perceptions of election participation in democracy in Indonesia are shown in Figure 2.

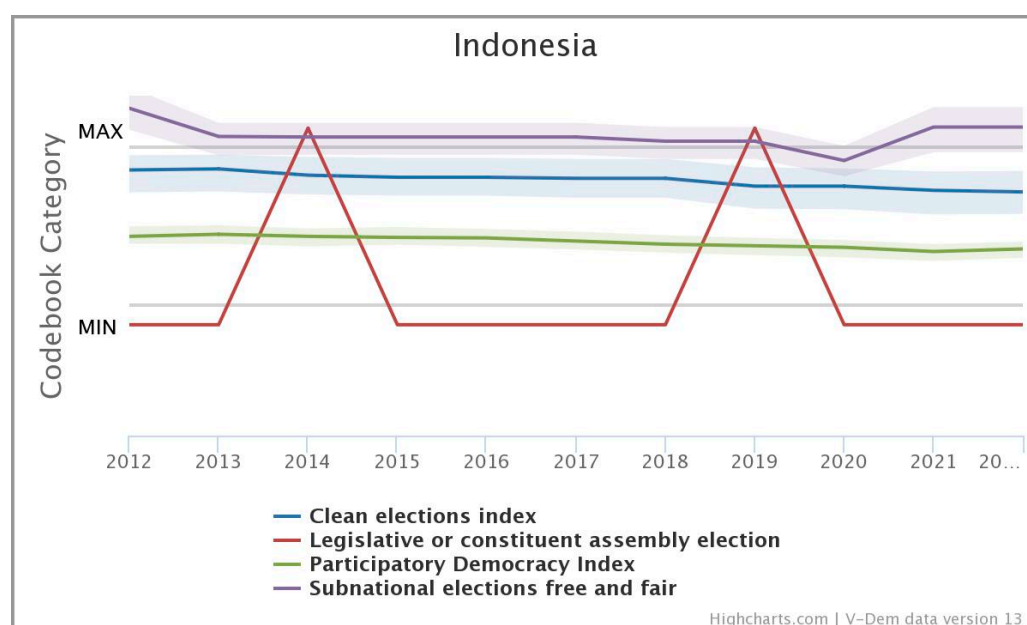


Figure 2. Indicators of DPD-RI election in democratic country, Indonesia. Source: modified and developed from <https://www.v-dem.net/> (accessed on 19 November 2023).

Another significant point is the stabilisation of the democratic participation index, where there are four indicators chosen to see the alignment of elected local legislators as representatives in the central government. There are four main indicators: (1) Clean election index: the existence of stability towards clean elections in accordance with the objectives of a democratic system, especially in the legislative elections in 2014 and 2019. This can also accommodate the opportunities of minority groups in participating in general elections throughout Indonesia, especially in Bali Province. (2) Legislative or constituent assembly elections; this indicator assesses legislative elections in Indonesia held in 2014 and 2019, combined with other indicators. (3) Participatory Democracy Index: the contestation of general elections in Indonesia is a feast of democracy for the election of legislative and executive members, in line with the index of public participation in the election of legislative members in Indonesia. (4) Subnational elections free and fair; the accommodated rights for every minority group in general elections are a benchmark for achieving fair and free elections. Including the election of Candidate 4 is a best practice where minorities can be selected in the majority group by exercising their right to vote and being elected in a democracy.

The analysis of the second component in Figure 3, namely the political party system, is based on four main indicators: (1) candidate selection—national/local: political stability in general elections at the central and local levels is an important thing in participating in

general elections; (2) party branches, both for the legislature and the executive, are closely related to the important role and influence of political party branches. It can be seen that the legislative elections in 2014 and 2019 coincided with the high role of political parties in winning the nominated candidates; (3) subnational party control is an indicator that ensures that the role of political parties at the central level is a strategic key in supporting legislative candidates, with the maximum value that major parties in Indonesia have more supporters in campaigning for their candidates. It is interesting that the stability of political party branches in the regions is an opportunity for every party and candidate to participate in elections, but also the control of political parties from the centre is also an additional factor in elections (Ma and Cao 2023); (4) party competition across regions; minority groups are accommodated in elections.

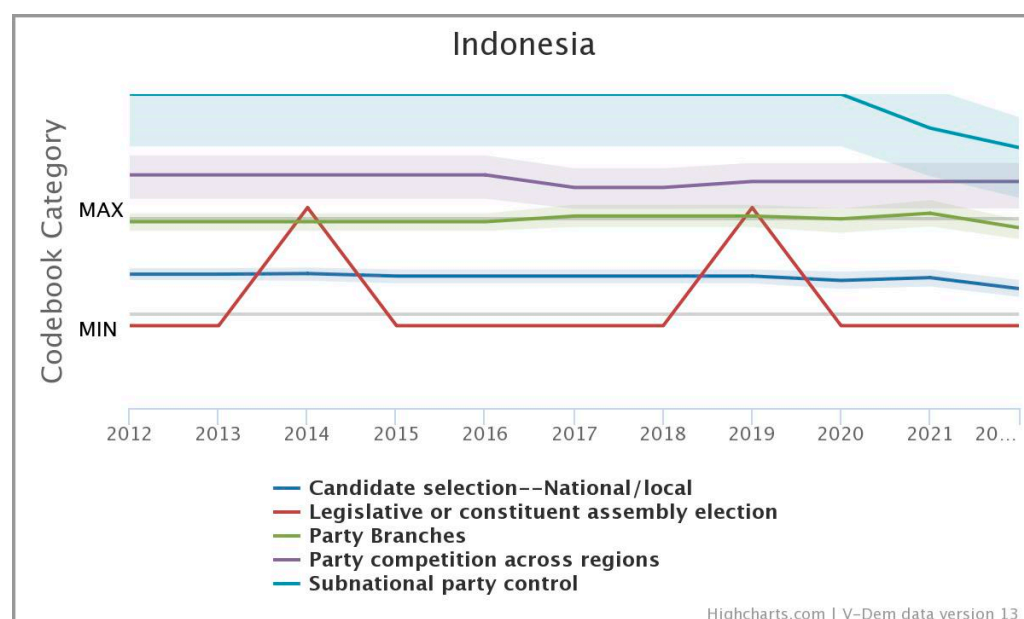


Figure 3. Indicators of parties and party systems in democratic country, Indonesia. Source: modified and developed from <https://www.v-dem.net/> (accessed on 19 November 2023).

Identity is a process of constructing meaning based on prioritised cultural attributes (Dahl 2008; Tonge et al. 2012). In relation to the identity constructed by Candidate 4 in how democracy and pluralism shaped political representation, it is the branding with a community figure who represents the Muslim voice in Bali by using Muslim culture. Identity is related to the process of internalising values, norms, and goals. As a figure, the candidate must certainly have values that are acceptable to the community itself but also cannot be separated from the process of internalising the values that exist in the community.

Based on the analysis, there are several factors for the election of Muslims in the DPD-RI election in Bali province. First, Candidate 4 branded himself as a community leader who represents the voice of Muslims in Bali by using the culture of “tolerant Muslims” when carrying out his activities in the community. Second, the 2019 General Election is not the first time Muslims have participated in legislative elections in Bali, but in 2004 the representation of Muslims failed because the votes of Balinese Muslims at that time were divided, as there were three candidates at the same time in the general election. Including in the 2014 elections, their representatives in the nominated legislative elections failed again due to the same factors. Third, the election of Candidate 4 as DPD-RI in Bali is inseparable from the experience as a board member of Muslim organisations and as a preacher who is seen by the community as a figure who is able to embrace all people regardless of party or religion in the community.

4. Discussion

The concept of minority-majority has often ignored processes of domination in economic, cultural, political and social spheres (Abdelhadi and O'Brien 2020; van Prooijen et al. 2018). In the context of the Muslim community in Bali, minority does not only refer to a smaller quantity compared to the total population, but there are also several perceptions related to cultural, economic, and political aspects that are considered as minority. Firstly, in terms of culture, the Muslim community tends to have a different culture from the majority of Balinese in terms of ethnicity, language, religion, social customs and of course history. Secondly, from an economic point of view, there are several features that facilitate differences with the Balinese: namely, differences in the amount of income, division of land, and property, although access to education and involvement in economic activities have equal conditions. From the political aspect, there are six categories of differences in political positions in society and government: namely, it is more difficult to put forward political candidates who match their social, religious, and cultural identity.

However, it should be noted that the emergence of Muslim minority representative politics is closely related to the discourse of political communication and power. This includes the following: (1) The effect of resistance/pressure of community domination on the Muslim minority, thus identifying itself as a minority community in Bali, and Muslim minority political candidates are considered as representing Muslims. (2) Mobilising cadres and sympathisers together with non-Muslim citizens in responding to social and economic problems is certainly a big challenge not only for Muslim and Hindu communities to be tolerant and open. (3) The feeling of a lack of aspiration for a number of policies that are considered not to accommodate the interests or aspirations of minority communities. Thus, in an interview, some informants no longer want to think about and even firmly reject the differentiation between Hindu and Muslim communities in Bali, which for them will create a barrier between the two.

In fact, political candidates have made adjustments to political communication, where the issue of tolerance has finally emerged as one of the amplifiers of political campaigns. This issue includes, for example, inviting to build togetherness in Bali, attending the gathering of figures, and often attending interfaith activities which on that occasion conveyed some ideas about efforts to build tolerance in a pluralistic society. Likewise, the figure aspect has become a benchmark for how Muslim candidates are chosen by the people in Bali.

The implication of a phenomenon of Muslim minority politics in Bali is basically influenced by several factors such as (1) how political candidates can build communication and mobilise the voting public through mapping the demographics of political votes; (2) the figures of political candidates or the involvement of religious and Balinese figures who do not conflict with ideology in Bali; (3) and how the interests of the community can be accommodated or voiced during political campaigns.

Therefore, our findings reveal that the power of language and strengthening in terms of characterisation is done by forming Islamic figures needed through the Muslim community in Bali. Moreover, the majority of Bali's population is Hindu, so it will be easier to communicate their aspirations if they have a representative with a Muslim minority identity. This is also inextricably linked to a campaign strategy which is based on political communication marketing. Identity politics that occur are closely related to ethnic identity and religious identity. Based on identity theory, it is a process of constructing meaning based on cultural aspects or identity that functions to organise and manage meanings, and is a process of individuation and identity related to internalising values, norms, and goals. Candidate 4's identity is formed as a Muslim figure in Bali.

5. Conclusions

In this research, the results of the data analysis conclude the following: (1) It is proven that language is not just a tool for communication, but it has a symbolic power to represent any ethnicity, especially for the minorities of different religious backgrounds. Language can

be the bridge between the political candidate and the audience. (2) Political candidates who use language for their voters or the public and are the representatives of their communities have a greater chance of getting their attention because they are not just speaking for themselves but for the audience they represent. Furthermore, the political candidate or politician must speak to the will of the people.

The phenomenon of minority political representation occurs long before it has been shaped by political candidates before entering politics. Where language creates its identity and becomes a respected Muslim figure by the Balinese Muslim community, “the interests of the public can be accommodated”, and it adjusts political communication by embracing and being included together in building togetherness in Bali. The social relations that are established are interpreted as cooperation between figures, and even the political campaign narrative that is built fights for matters relating to the ummah.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, N.S. and N.F.; methodology, N.S.; software, N.S.; validation, N.F., R.M. and D.E.; formal analysis, N.S.; investigation, N.S.; resources, N.S.; data curation, R.M.; writing—original draft preparation, N.S.; writing—review and editing, N.F., R.M. and D.E.; visualization, D.E.; supervision, N.F.; project administration, N.S. funding acquisition, N.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study did not require ethical approval.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are unavailable due to concern around privacy.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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