



# The Effectiveness of Religious Influence in Electoral Participation

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**Abstract:** Following the general election in Indonesia, various groups engaged in this democratic process with the objective of identifying a leader capable of guiding the nation and its citizens toward the attainment of justice and prosperity. This study will elucidate the various factors influence their participation in this election, with a particular focus on the impact of religion. The effectiveness of religion in electoral processes is a subject of considerable analysis. Nonetheless, it may yield both beneficial and detrimental effects in the context of elections. The beneficial outcomes comprise enhanced inter-group tolerance, whereas the detrimental aspects involve suspicion, conflict, and division. Nonetheless, the research posits that the impact of religion, regardless of its form or extent, will not adversely influence the electoral process provided it remains in alignment with constitutional principles.

**Keywords:** Influence, Elections, Religion, Society, Indonesia.

## 1. Introduction

The organization of general elections is an important event in the democratic life of a country. In this situation, religion has a major influence in shaping voter behavior and political party campaign tactics. Significant influence on voter behavior, and political party election tactics. Meanwhile, in the 2024 General Election, according to data from the KPU, voters from gen Z are 46.8 million voters out of the total DPT for the 2024 General Election of 204,807,222 voters. The combination of Gen Z and Millennials has a very important role in the implementation or results of the 2024 Election. This is because today's times have progressed information technology skills and also have a moral and spiritual foundation for the community. Voters' decisions to support candidates who share their religious beliefs are influenced by the religion they profess, in addition to providing most individuals with a moral and spiritual foundation. The winning tactics of political parties, which heavily emphasize the use of religious symbols in election campaigns, is one important reason (legal source). (Husein, 2014)

Religion is an individual's belief in spiritual entities, including spirits, souls, and other phenomena that affect human existence. Indonesia officially recognizes 6 religions namely: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Within the broader framework of Indonesian society, anthropology of religion as a scientific study is still not well known. This is due to various factors, in particular the lack of public interest in religious studies related to culture, even religious behavior is not a priority, either consciously or unconsciously, has emerged as an important source in the formation of culture, and conversely, the cultural background of a region variably influences human religious behavior. (Warganegara et al., n.d.)

Religion is a fundamental and universal human need. Elections serve as a means to ascertain people's preferences for the future direction and policies of the state. Hence, religion as a spiritual consciousness that recognizes a reality beyond the observable world, where humans constantly anticipate His goodness, guidance and compassion-an

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ontological truth that even those who reject religion, such as communists, cannot refute. (Sahari & Fikra Pratiwi Arifuddin, 2021)

Religion influences one's decision-making process when contemplating the election of local leaders based on religious criteria. Regarding the tendency to support candidates who evoke religious sentiments, we can hypothesize that individuals within the same social circle are a major factor. Individuals who have better social relationships are less likely to vote for candidates based on religious affiliation.

The issue of religion in Indonesia is a persistent and consistently present one, with various strategies used to maximize electoral support, one of which is to include religious elements. Each party seeks material or in-kind assistance from Islamic leaders and visits Islamic boarding schools and mosques to secure a sure victory. This happens because political parties assume that success can be easily achieved if the religion of the prospective leader is in line with the majority religion in the country. Therefore, it is not surprising when candidates go to great lengths to demonstrate their devoutness and piety in order to gain massive electoral support. (Fitria & Abdulhakam, n.d.)

## **2. Materials and Methods**

This article uses qualitative methods to obtain data and review theoretical frameworks from various sources related to this research. Data collection is classified into two main types: primary and secondary data. Primary data is obtained from books and journals, while secondary data is sourced from news articles that can be accessed online. This approach involved a systematic search and synthesis of information drawn from diverse sources, including books, academic journals and empirical studies that have been conducted. A thorough critical analysis of the literature sourced from various references will be conducted, ensuring that it is comprehensive enough to support the hypotheses and ideas presented.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 The Effectiveness of Religious Influence on Elections in Indonesia.**

Elections are a democratic mechanism used to choose national leaders. Religion plays an important role in shaping the electoral process, especially in Indonesia's diverse society. Media, business consultants and social media influencers significantly influence public opinion. Nonetheless, insufficient selectivity on social media, limited education levels and insufficient national awareness complicate the electoral process. In addition, the effectiveness of law enforcement is often inadequate, potentially jeopardizing the legitimacy of elections. Article 22E paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution mandates that elections be held directly, generally, freely, secretly, honestly and fairly every five years.

Ismail Sunny asserts that "Elections are a certainty and a vital institution for democracy. A free election means that within a certain period of time the people will have the opportunity to express their desire for political lines that must be recognized by the state and society and for the people who must carry out that policy." (Ismail 1984) Meanwhile, Lukman Edy argues that "Elections are an instrument of democracy to measure the democratic process. Elections can illustrate how the legitimacy of a succession of government leaders is obtained through the political participation of citizens voting in elections. The quality of elections can be seen from the level of political participation" (Andi Septiadi et al., 2022)

Law No. 7 Year 2017 emphasizes that general elections are a mechanism through which people can elect members of the DPR, DPD, President and Vice President, and members of DPRD. This election is held directly, publicly, freely, confidentially, honestly, and fairly within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Elections reflect the implementation of people's sovereignty and are a manifestation of the principles of democracy. (Simamora et al., n.d.) Furthermore, the involvement of the people to realize their sovereignty is not only to participate in elections, but also to actively provide input, suggestions, and constructive criticism to the government, and oversee the course of government. These voices can be expressed through representative institutions, mass media, or legitimate demonstrations.

Political engagement is a fundamental criterion of democracy in a country. The premise is that increasing the level and intensity of political participation among citizens correlates with greater levels of democracy in a country. An important aspect of political engagement is citizen participation in elections. Sovereign citizens choose representatives through elections to sit in executive or legislative bodies, which have the capacity to make public policies that affect all citizens. Individual involvement in the electoral process, particularly voting, is therefore critical to the sustainability of democracy.

Political engagement refers to people's involvement in political activities, including elections and other political endeavors. People's political engagement can significantly influence the policy formulation process. However, many individuals have a limited understanding. They understand that politics involves decision-making. They believe that abstention does not matter, as the outcome does not change. It is an easy notion in the minds of individuals. (Asir, 2014)

Religion is a doctrine of divine origin or human contemplation, summarized in sacred texts passed down through generations, intended to provide guidance for achieving happiness in this world as well as in the hereafter. It includes a belief in supernatural entities, which elicits an emotional response and a conviction that the fulfillment of life depends on maintaining a positive relationship with these supernatural forces.

Many factors can influence the selection of leaders in Indonesia. Factors suggested to arise from the impact of religion include: (a) Strong Candidate's Religious Spirituality Identity (b) Support from Specific Religious Communities, (c) Candidate's Track Record on Religion, (d) Supporting Party/Coalition

In contemporary societies, there has been a shift in the political behavior of voters with different religions, indicating less fundamental differences. The correlation between religion and party affiliation is less clear, as Islamic voters do not consistently support religiously-based (Islamic) parties. This is due to the prevailing trend of nationalism and increased voter reasoning, leading to more 'logical' voting behavior. Voters have established criteria for evaluating the success of leaders, including economic growth, prosperity, national unity, education and rule of law. To achieve this, individuals place greater trust in individuals rather than political parties, valuing personal integrity, social responsibility and professional competence. Religion and

ethnicity are not currently significant variables, as religious or ethnic identification does not substantially influence voting orientation.

### 3.2 Dynamics of Religious Influence on Elections

An issue that has persisted in Islamic philosophical discourse throughout Muslim history is politics. Islam appears to be inextricably linked to politics, both in its normative doctrinal analysis and its historical significance. Islam normatively offers comprehensive guidance in relation to political matters, both in a general context and specifically regarding state or party affairs. It is important to acknowledge that the Qur'ān and hadith are equally compatible when it comes to organizing society or the ummah. While both of Islam's primary texts do not formally endorse the need for political parties or state structures to organize the interests of Muslims and preserve Islam, the Qur'ān does provide guidance on political behavior. It commands everyone to adhere to the values of justice and equality as articulated in Surah 16, verses 90-91.

Populism is closely related to identity politics. A study titled *Political Identities: The Missing Link in the Study of Populism* illustrates the relationship between populism and identity politics. Melendez and Cristobal's scientific assertion in the study is that populism can only emerge in the presence of anti-establishment identity politics. As defined by the Big Indonesian Dictionary, politicization refers to the process of making state actions, ideas, and similar elements political. From this definition, politicization is described as a process in which concepts and ideas are transformed into political actions. The politicization of religion refers to the use of religious beliefs for a particular political agenda. The politicization of religion is an important idea in the understanding of Political Theology, including Political Islam, which places religion as a strategic functional force in relation to the existing political situation. (Jati, 2023)

Indonesia is reported to have the largest Muslim population in the world. According to Globalreligiustfuture data, the Muslim population in Indonesia in 2010 was 209.12 million, which constituted about 87% of the overall population. This number is projected to reach 229.62 million by 2020. India has the second largest Muslim population, at 176.2 million, and Pakistan comes in third with 167.41 million. In 2010, the global Muslim population reached 1.6 billion, or about 23% of the entire world population of 6.9 billion.

Indonesia has emerged as a paradigm of democracy, has the largest Muslim population in the world, and has facilitated a significant influx of influence from various Muslim-majority countries towards the adoption of democracy as a viable means to achieve freedom. The Pew Research Center estimates that by 2070, the Muslim population will be the largest in the world. Alongside Indonesia, which serves as an example of an Islamic country embracing a democratic political framework, Turkey, despite having a majority Muslim population, (McDonnell & Cabrera, 2019) has unfortunately transitioned into a secular state, resulting in the diminishing influence of religion in the governance system. Unlike Indonesia, which maintains that religion should still influence the governance of the country through its self-constructed ideology of Pancasila, enshrined in the first precept of Belief in One God. Afghanistan, with a 99% Muslim population, attempted to establish a democratic government; however, it ultimately failed due to the prolonged conflict that engulfed the country.

Malaysia, Brunei and Saudi Arabia chose to adopt monarchical systems. It is evident that democracy poses challenges for countries with a majority Muslim population.

One of the media tools for achieving a democratic relationship between the people and the state (government) is the election. to establish a democratic relationship between the state (government) and the populace. The extent of legislative authority is one of the state tools pertaining to people's representation. legislative authority, which is charged with creating laws that improve the standard of living for all Indonesians. the daily lives of every Indonesian (Bachmid, 2020)

The growing prominence of Islamic political parties in electoral and political party literature is closely related to the fact that some citizens' religious identities are inextricably linked to the prevalence of Islamic political parties. It is impossible to divorce the existence of Islamic political parties from a particular citizen's religious identity, which is linked to ideology. philosophy. (Ilmu et al., 2020) The necessity of ideological channels in politics is the underlying premise of Islamic political parties, and this viewpoint is evident in democracies. This viewpoint is prevalent in democracies.

The rise of Islam as a global political force in the modern era coincides with the growing significance of Islamic parties in political party and electoral literature (Arifin, 2022) It is impossible to divorce the existence of Islamic political parties from some citizens' religious identities, which are linked to ideology. philosophy. The premise for the formation of Islamic political parties is that political channels must be ideological, and this viewpoint is evident in democracies. This viewpoint is prevalent in democracies.

The manipulation of religious knowledge and understanding through campaigns, indoctrination, propaganda, and other tactics is known as the politicization of religion. Propaganda, indoctrination, campaigns, diffusion, and socialization in the public sphere are used to report or interpret religion or belief issues in order to migrate understanding and difficulties and make it appear as though it is religious or belief knowledge, after which it is implemented. In order to incorporate the interests of anything into a political agenda, pressure is applied to alter the religious/belief consensus after religious/belief knowledge has established. (Supriyadi, n.d.) into a political plan to influence public policy or society In his book *Kiai Nationalism: Religion-Based Social Construction*, Ali Maschan Moesa claims that the politics of religion entails the use of religious symbols to inspire. (Kurniawati, 2023)

Regarding elections, religion affects how people think while they are debating whether or not to vote for the regional leader. (Glen et al., 2024) We can speculate that persons in similar social circles are the primary factor in relation to the propensity to vote for candidates based on religious sentiments. Conversely, those with higher social bridging are less likely to support religiously motivated candidates. are less inclined to select individuals on the basis of their faith.

Najar asserts that religion truly creates faith as a fundamental human need and turns into a source of safety, tranquility, and peace. fundamental human needs and turn into a source of safety, tranquility, and harmony. (Psikologi et al., n.d.) Therefore, it is impossible to divorce religion from personal conduct, including decision-making. Despite the fact that studies indicate that a candidate's religious affiliation influences their election outcome.

There have always been conflicts between religion and politics in Indonesia, and using religion is one of the strategies used to garner the most votes. pertaining to religion.(Fitria & Abdulhakam, n.d.) In an attempt to garner a sizable number of votes, every political party swarms to court the favor of Islamic leaders, frequently visiting mosques and boarding schools.

An intriguing electoral and democratic occurrence in Indonesia is that, despite the majority of the population being Muslim, no political party has ever won an election in the country's history. (Sofianto, 2015)Similarly, when it comes to defining a suitable governance system, the secular western-style democracy is regarded as the finest, even with the majority of people being Muslims.

Elections are a critical point that evaluates the balance between religion and state. This moment requires a measured strategy to preserve diversity and foster an inclusive environment in the political process. In this situation, religious moderation becomes an important basis for ensuring that elections embody the principles of justice, tolerance and unity.(Hario Putra et al., 2024)

Religious moderation serves as an important basis for tolerance in the electoral process, fosters solidarity, and supports fair elections. Through religious moderation, we should not fabricate lies or put each other down. We should not uncritically justify our decisions in the selection of leaders, be it in the legislature, political parties, or presidential elections.(Ronaldo & Darmaiza, 2021)

Religious moderation is essential for fostering inter- and intra-religious harmony. Even among individuals who share the same faith, there are many different interpretations, sects and perspectives. It is important to foster harmonious relationships, especially regarding the crucial factor that can test the relationship between religion and the state, namely the harmony between religious communities and the government. Religious communities in Indonesia are required to support government initiatives, particularly elections, which serve as a democratic mechanism and empower people to take on leadership roles in the country.(Mikail, n.d.)

Excessive fanaticism in political decisions, in the absence of the principles of tolerance and diversity, will inevitably lead to the recurrence of historically nuanced and segregative events, which is of great concern. Currently, data from BRIN indicates that identity politics is dormant during this election era.

The use of political expressions such as *kadrun*, *cebong*, *buzzerp*, and others has significantly reduced. However, this does not mean that they are incapable of resurgence. Identity politics are social divisions, similar to social fault lines, which include factors such as ethnicity, religion, and region, that can divide society.

Indeed, that is how the Indonesian state should be. It seems to be the nature of the beast that coexisting with different ethnicities, religions, languages, regions and perhaps political affiliations is impossible. Diverse alternatives are commonplace. The most important goal is to remind ourselves of our commitment to the nation and state founded on Pancasila, as we aspire to build a just, prosperous, dignified, advanced and equitable Indonesia.(Nurhaidah, n.d.)

This will serve as a guideline in the electoral process. It is a necessity that must be achieved, keeping the ultimate goal in mind. Indeed, this sometimes involves emotions. Propaganda that develops into blind fanaticism can trigger disputes.

The legal policy or official position (policy) about the legislation that will be enacted, either through the creation of new laws or through existing laws, is known as the politics of law. that will be put into effect in order to accomplish state objectives, either by passing new legislation or by repealing existing legislation. replacing outdated legislation to accomplish state objectives. The Preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia states that the purpose of legal politics is to determine whether laws will be repealed or not enforced in order to accomplish state objectives.(Noviawati,2019)

## 5 Conclusions

Religion serves as a personal identity and determines voters' choices when deciding on the leaders of the country and political parties. Religion is not always the main factor that influences voters' decisions, as social change and a growing sense of nationalism have led to a more racialized electorate. Religion serves a laudable purpose, inspiring collaboration, peace and tolerance; however, when used for political purposes, it poses a significant risk to unity in Indonesia. The incorporation of religion in politics can polarize society

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