

Indonesian Young Muslim Voters and Their Views on Political Islam

Bobi Arisandi, Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia, Indonesia

The European Conference on Arts & Humanities 2023
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Indonesia as one the biggest Muslim populated country, political Islam is important case to discuss because voters' political preference can highly be affected by their believe in this sense, it could be religion. In addition, young Moslem voters although they are important political asset, there are rarely any research in exploring their perspective toward political Islam. Therefore, this research is conducted. In conducting the research, I used mixed method as mean to prove the hypothesis and answer the research question. Non probability method with nested sampling design technique is used in this research. The participants in this research are young Moslem voters who I categorized as middle and live in Sumatera and Java Island where they come from rural and urban background. Based on the data finding and analysis, it is found that Indonesian young Muslim voters prefers post Islamism in associated with political Islam compared to Islamism and 70% of them recognize the outcome of political Islam is sharia'ization. Furthermore, post Islamism group in the research disagree with the establishment of Islamic state due to tolerance issue.

Keywords: Political Islam, Islamism, Post Islamism, Mixed Method

iafor

The International Academic Forum

www.iafor.org

Introduction

In Prince, Machiavelli shows a prudent ruler struggling to maintain power as proof of the reality of politics (Prince, 2005). He argues that politics does not refer to an ideal form but a realistic condition. We can perceive politics as something that is not normative but conditional as well as fluid. The role of reason is dominant in choosing your political orientation, ideology, party, and leader. However, that fact is different when inner belief or emotion intervenes with logic. Politics can become something very personal, like faith or religion. The phenomenon can be seen in the rise of Muslim political identity like what happened in Indonesia during the Jakarta governor election in Ahok's case (Nawab et al., 2018). Although perceived as a strong candidate the presence of Ahok as a non-Muslim candidate in the election where Muslim voters are dominant triggered strong sentiment which led to an Islamism campaign against him. The empirical evidence in Ahok's case showed that politics although theoretical needs to rely on solely reality and rational choice yet emotion is highly involved.

Regarding that discussion, political Islam as a variety of politics that infuse Islamic values can have an interesting dimension to discuss. As Ayoob (2004) stated at the most basic level, adherents of political Islam believe that Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary Muslim world and implemented in some fashion. In the struggle for political Islam, several case studies occurred to frame the faces of political Islam especially related to how parties navigate themselves through the endless debate of religion vs democracy as well as gather voters. For instance, in the case of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP), the fact that it is considered a religious populist party led by populist leaders as well (Nukhet, 2021) there is an unanswered question about either the party's Islamism, post-Islamism, or turkey conservatism (Tugal in Bayat, 2013). Although it consistently campaigns on infusing Islamic values to capitalize voters. In addition, the existence of the Ennahda dan Justice and Development (PJD) party in Tunisia and Morocco also enriches the discussion on the discourse.

Indonesia is the largest Muslim-populated nation (World Population Review, 2022), and young Muslim voters might be a great political asset. However, there has not been clear research on how young Muslim voters embrace political Islam. If we refer to the most sound form of political Islam within political struggle, the alternatives will lead to the two most recognized forms (later on called Faces) of political Islam, Islamism, and post-Islamism. The interesting issue is since the dominant Islamic parties in Turkey, Morocco, and Tunisia employ faces, they produced different political results. It means that there was various perspective when voters in Turkey, Morocco, and Tunisia perceived the faces. Based on that finding, the researcher assumes a diverse perspective will also occur when young Indonesian Muslim voters are confronted with the faces of political Islam in this case Islamism and post-Islamism. However, because Indonesia is a majority Muslim-populated country, political Islam is still assumed to gain momentum like what happens in Malaysia (Saat and Alatas, 2022). Although in Indonesia, the fact that political Islam is generated by political parties is weaker due to Muslim voters becoming more flexible in choosing secular parties that create pro-Muslim agenda according to Tanuwidjaja's claim (2010). Based on that discussion, the researcher argues that Indonesian young Muslim voters will prefer post-Islamism compared to Islamism because they perceive political Islam more like creating a pro-Muslim agenda rather than symbolic Islamic provocation such as creating an Islamic state.

There is a lot of research conducted on the issue of Political Islam (Robe, 2019, Schwedler, 2011), religious parties (Nukhet, 2021), as well as Islamism and Post-Islamism (Bayat, 2013). However, there is rarely research on Indonesian young Muslim voters and how they perceive political Islam, especially related to two faces of political Islam, the Islamism and post-Islamism. Due to those notions, the researcher frames the research to answer a research question on how Indonesian Muslim voters perceive Political Islam.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Political Islam defines as generally any interpretation of Islam that serves as a basic political identity (Voll & Son, 2011). If we go deeper to see the implementation of what researchers define as the faces of political Islam, it leads to lots of terms; however, some alternatives lead to the Islamic political struggle happening in Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Turkey. From there, we see two major terms used by scholars to describe political Islam, either it is Islamism or post-Islamism. Islamism is a term used interchangeably with political Islam. Bayat (2013) refers to those ideologies and movements that strive to establish some kind of an “Islamic order”—a religious state, sharia law, and moral codes in Muslim societies and communities. On the other hand, he adds that Post Islamism expressed in acknowledging secular exigencies, freedom from rigidity, in breaking down the monopoly of religious truth (Bayat, 2013). He also mentioned that post-Islamism emphasizes religiosity and rights. Yet, while it favors a civil and nonreligious state, it accords an active role for religion in the public sphere. In referring to the theories, the researcher develops a theoretical framework as follow:

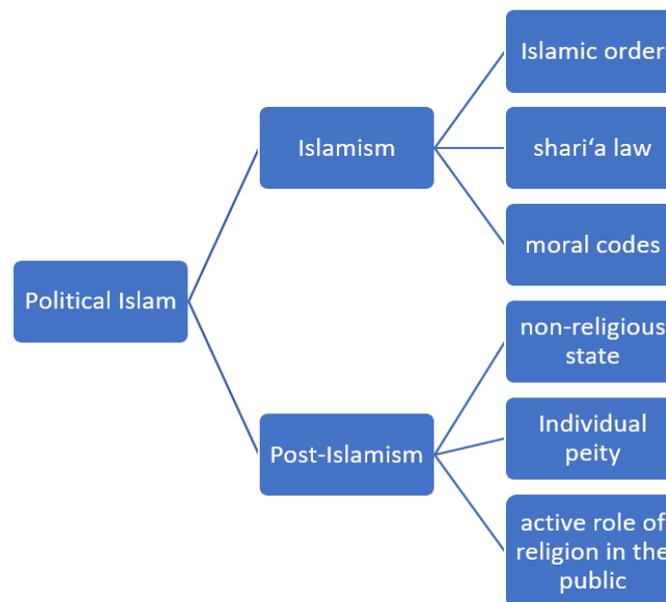


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

From theoretical framework, researcher designs conceptual framework. Researcher categorized the three indicators for Islamism and another three for post Islamism which will be used on the data collecting technique. From there, participants of the research will be led to choose from two cluster of indicators and asked to present their reason. The conceptual framework that can be seen in the figure below:

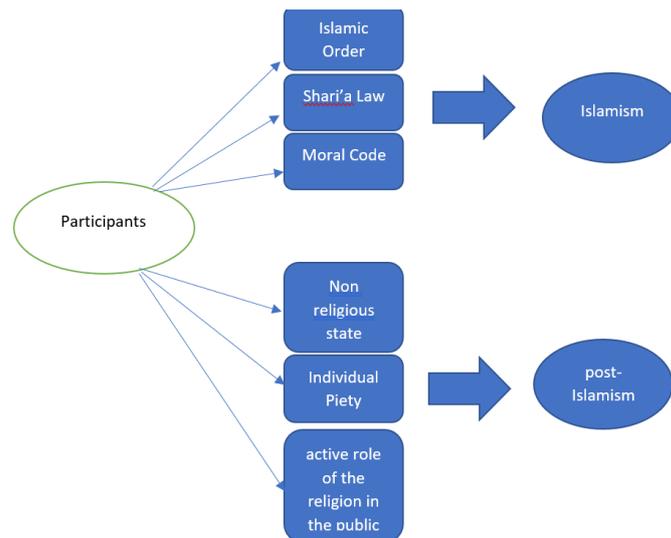


Figure 2: Conceptual framework

Methodology

This research will use the mixed method with a nested sampling design in collecting and analyzing data. According to Small (2011), mixed methods: are mixed data–collection studies, which combine two or more kinds of data; and mixed data–analysis studies, which combine two or more analytical strategies, examine qualitative data with quantitative methods, or explore quantitative data with qualitative techniques. Based on that definition, the researcher tends to observe two kinds of data quantitative, and it is followed by qualitative data by means to test the hypothesis and to answer the research question. This method is chosen as it enables the exploration of society and individuals as its unit of analysis. Meanwhile, the nested design is the most possible sampling design that can link quantitative data and qualitative data by capturing a bigger sample for quantitative data and a smaller sample extracted for qualitative data.

This research will examine the 167 participants who are considered as the middle class. Taking a middle class as the sample is considered an important strategy due to the richness of the potential to accumulate information on political perspectives in democracy, political system as well as political Islam. It happens because compared to other classes like the lower class (labor) and upper class (elite) middle class is concerned more about political issues. Taking the case of the United Kingdom, its democratization process was strongly influenced by the middle class (Barrington More Jr. 1993). The argument resonated with the finding from Diwan (2014) on the reason why the Middle East was experiencing huge protest for changing the autocratic system to a more democratic, one is due to the middle-class effect.

Indonesian young Muslim voters that I used as the sample are considered the middle class. They spread in urban and rural areas in both Sumatra and Java Island. The sampling method is a nonprobability method with a purposeful sampling technique. According to Patton (In Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007), in purposeful sampling, the sample is individuals, groups, and settings are considered for selection if they are “information rich”. For the data collecting technique, the researcher used close-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire is used to reveal quantitative findings. Meanwhile, the semi-structured interview is for exploring qualitative data.

Result and Discussion

For the data analysis, the researcher approaches it with two analyses. First, the data from the questionnaire is analyzed using descriptive statistics. From there, it will be followed by in-depth interview toward selected participants based on purposeful sampling. The result can be seen below:

No	Statement	Value	Yes	No	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Does political Islam have to produce an Islamic state?	75	45.7%	54.3%	0.457317073	0.499700644
2	Do you agree that the product of Islamic politics is sharia law?	116	71.2%	28.8%	0.707317073	0.456387653
3	Does Islamic politics mean giving power to the state to regulate the morals of its citizens?	86	52.8%	47.2%	0.524390244	0.500934336
Total Islamism score		277			0.56300813	0.496518937

Table 1. Means and standard deviation on the questionnaire of Islamism

No	Statement	Value	Yes	No	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Does Islamic politics have to be in harmony with democratic values even though they are imported from Western civilization?	101	62.%	38%	0.615853659	0.487882494
2	Does Islamic politics mean that we have to focus more on improving individual piety (bottom up) rather than implementing sharia laws (top down)?	77	47.2%	52.8%	0.469512195	0.500598176
3	Should Political Islam encourage the active role of religion in society rather than changing the ideology or structure of the state?	129	79.1%	20.9%	0.786585366	0.410972868
Total Post-Islamism score		307			0.62398374	0.48487719

Table 2. Means and standard deviation on the questionnaire of Post Islamism

Table (1) showed participants' perspectives toward Political Islam which can be associated with Islamism while Table (2) is linked with post-Islamism. Based on the finding, it can be seen that the majority of respondents perceived political Islam as post-Islamism rather than

Islamism with a mean of 0.62398374 over 0.56300813 mean from Islamism. The finding proves the hypothesis that Indonesian young Muslim voters will prefer post-Islamism compared to Islamism, yet the majority still perceive political Islam as using creating sharia law.

On the contrary, although the majority of respondents associated political Islam with post-Islamism, the second highest score in the two questionnaires are in the question “Do you agree that the product of Islamic politics is sharia law?” and approximately 71.2 % of respondents answered “yes” with 0.707317073 mean score. The finding in the research showed although young Muslim voters do not support the establishment of an Islamic state as the product of political Islam, they agree that political Islam in the end generates syariah law. It means that there is a strong indication that young Muslim voters in Indonesia are politically secular yet individually Islamist.

In addition, the researcher interviewed two groups, Islamism and post Islamism group who are categorized through questionnaires that have been answered. Based on the interview, it is found that the Islamism group is significantly from a rural area with a majority of bachelor graduates and prefers Islamic parties. Although they consider an Islamism group majority do not agree with the Islamic state establishment due to tolerance issue and it can be seen from one of the transcripts as follow:

Transcript 1

<i>interviewer</i>	<i>Does Islamic politics have to produce an Islamic state? Why?</i>
<i>interviewee</i>	<i>No. Because if you create an Islamic state, it is worried that the Islamic community will find it difficult to tolerate non-Islamic people in a country (as long as it doesn't interfere with matters of worship). This also concerns the freedom of the people in choosing their beliefs</i>

Significantly, they agree with Shariah law implementation as well as moral code enforcement by the state. However, one of the respondents agree with the Islamic state notion because if the ideology is still secular, the Islamic political agenda is not going to work well. as it is stated in the transcript below:

Transcript 2

<i>interviewer</i>	<i>Does Islamic politics have to produce an Islamic state? Why?</i>
<i>interviewee</i>	<i>Yes, for me if this is implemented it will be better and easier to regulate a country (totality) especially with the creation of a pure Islamic state, it will minimize the occurrence of violations and immorality</i>

On the other hand, post Islamism group respondent majority graduated from bachelor's programs, yet the majority of urban people significantly prefer Secular parties. In the interview, all respondents agree on how political Islam should go side by side with democratic values although it comes from Western civilization. One interviewee even urges that political Islam has to correlate with democratic values since political Islam that creates a

monarch system is not compatible with a state with diverse races as can be seen from the transcript below:

Transcript 3

interviewer

Does Islamic Politics have to be in harmony with democratic values even though they are imported from Western civilization? Why!

interviewee

it is a must. Because there is indeed a correlation between democracy and Islamic values. If you really want to use hereditary Islamic politics, sometimes it produces leaders who do not meet the criteria. Especially for a large and diverse population

Finally, from quantitative and qualitative data analysis, we can conclude that Indonesian young Muslim voters perceive political Islam as a way to infuse moral code into the public domain as well as sharia implementation. Despite the idea of Sharia implementation yet they neglect the idea of establishing an Islamic state and prefer to choose to live side by side with the democratic system since it prevents intolerance acts. The finding resonates with research conducted by (Ahmad, n.d.) where he found that Muslim youths have multiple personalities in which they want to be entirely religious and apply Islam in all aspects. However, he also added that they are also aware of Pancasila as the state base (Five principles) and the right choice in a pluralistic Indonesian context.

Conclusion

To sum up, the majority of young Muslim voters in this research perceive political Islam as post-Islamism which endorses the hypothesis. Although the majority prefer political Islam as post-Islamism, more than 70% agree that rather than other outcomes, sharia law is the main result of political Islam. It means that sharia'ization is the end road of political Islam. The last, based on the interview majority of interviewees who are categorized as Islamism groups do not support the Islamic state even though they are sharia'ization and moral code enforcement by the state because it will be more tolerant to the non-Muslim citizen.

In addition, this research was using the nonprobability method with a nested sampling design with 167 respondents from rural and urban areas. Therefore, further research is highly suggested to use probability sampling or big data since it can help to capture more accurate reality in Indonesia. However, this research can be used as a steppingstone to understand that fact Indonesia is the biggest Muslim-populated country, in this study young Muslim voters still prefers to have democracy as a state system, and post-Islamism is the majority chosen by the respondent as the form of political Islam where the finding is confirming another result finding which is conducted in a different area in Indonesia.

References

- Ahmad, M. (n.d.). Indonesian Muslim Youth and the Discourse on the Caliphate System, Islamic State and Sharia-Based Regional Regulations in the Post-Reform Era. <https://doi.org/10.28918/religia.v24i1>
- Ayoob, M. (2004). Political Islam: Image and Reality. *World Policy Journal*, 21(3) (Fall, 2004), 1-14. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40210231>
- Barrington, M. 1993. The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy. New York: Beacon Press. Chapter 1.
- Bayat, A. (2013). Post-Islamism at Large. In A. Bayat (Ed.). Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam (pp.3-32). New York: Oxford University Press. <https://academic.oup.com/book/2243>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). A concise introduction to mixed methods research. SAGE Publications.
- Ishac Diwan. 2014. "Understanding Revolution in the Middle East: the Central Role of the Middle Class." In Ishac Diwan. Ed. Understanding the Political Economy of the Arab Uprisings. New Jersey: World Scientific. pp. 29-56.
- Machiavelli, N. (2005). The Prince. Oxford University Press.
- Nawab, M., Osman, M., & Waikar, P. (2018). Fear and Loathing: Uncivil Islamism and Indonesia's Anti-Ahok Movement. 106, 89–109. <https://doi.org/10.5728/indonesia.106.008>
- Nukhet, S., A. (2021). Religious populist parties, nationalisms, and strategies of competition: the case of the AK Party in Turkey. *RELIGION, STATE & SOCIETY*, 49:3, 248-263. [https:// DOI:10.1080/09637494.2021.1949216](https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2021.1949216)
- Robe, C. (2019). Discovering Muslim Youth Voices. *Cineaste*, 44(4), 32-36.
- Saat, N. and Alatas, A. (2022). Islamisation in Malaysia Beyond UMNO and PAS. *ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute: Perspective*. Issue No. 96.
- Tanuwidjaja, S. (2010). Political Islam and Islamic Parties in Indonesia: Critically Assessing the Evidence of Islam's Political Decline. *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*. 32(1), 29-49. DOI:10.1353/csa.0.0079
- Voll, J., O. & Sonn, T. (2011). Oxford Bibliographies: Political Islam. Oxford University Press, Inc.
- World Population Review. Muslim Population by Country 2022. Retrieved Nov 25, 2022, from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/muslim-population-by-country>