Identity Politics and Political Behavior of Kiai in Tasikmalaya City: Case Study of Religious, Kinship and Regional Identity

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Abstract

This research examines the influence of political identity, especially religious, kinship and regional identity, on the political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City ahead of the General Election. Data was obtained through surveys and interviews with respondents from kiai circles in the area. The research results show that religious identity has the greatest influence on kiai's political behavior, followed by kinship identity, and then regional identity. Simultaneously, these three political identity factors also have a significant influence on kiai's political behavior. This research provides a better understanding of the complexity of identity politics in the context of kiai in Tasikmalaya City.

Keywords: Political Identity, Kiai, Political Behavior, Religious Identity.

1. Introduction

Democracy is a system of government in which important decisions are taken through a general election mechanism, which allows the people to actively participate in the political process. General elections are the main pillar in maintaining balance and justice in a democratic country. This is because, in a democracy, the government and society interact with each other, listen to each other, and work together to ensure that the election process goes according to plan. The more people participate in political affairs, the greater the possibility that the government will be recognized as legitimate and respected by its citizens (Dulkiah, 2020). This is due to the fact that in a democracy, the people have the right to determine who they choose as their leader. By exercising their voting rights, the people have the power to influence the direction and policies of their government, creating a platform for collectively articulating the interests and aspirations of society.

Moreover, voting in general elections is also a way for individuals to evaluate government performance. The public can ensure that the government works in the interests of the people, encouraging transparency, accountability and responsiveness to public demands (Rahman & Anwar 2022; Zulfikar et al., 2022; Millie & Hindasah 20115). The results of general elections are a reflection of the legitimacy of the government which can measure the level of support and trust from the public.

In Indonesia, post-reformation, political dynamics have involved the use of identity politics to shape public opinion, influence people's behavior, and sometimes exclude certain groups. This identity politics attempts to emphasize differences between groups in society, often going beyond the overall view of the state or society. This phenomenon became very prominent in the election campaign between Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto in 2014, and again occurred in the recent presidential election campaign.

Identity politics is a concept and political movement that focuses attention on difference as the main political category. Even though a community has a collective ideology and goals, it is inevitable that there will be individuals with different identities. Identities, by their nature, tend to be selfish and encourage to advance individual interests in the political decision-making process (Pitoyo et al., 2019; Rahmat et al., 2020; Ramadhan, 2021). Therefore, individuals often group together based on similar religion, ethnicity or race in an effort to fight for common interests. Identity politics is an approach that focuses on the differences that identify individuals in different groups. This can

include aspects such as ethnicity, religion or nationality. Its significance increased in the 2019 presidential election because it influenced the decisions taken by voters.

Furthermore, identity politics is the practice of using individual identity as a tool to defend the rights of other individuals who have similar identities. The basis of this concept is the belief that each individual has a special interest in defending his or her own community, and this can be achieved by working together to support the interests of people who share similar identities. Theoretically, this means that identity politics should emphasize similarities between various groups to create a strong and united movement. However, in reality, this can also be used to defend the rights of people who already have great power.

Identity politics is also a system for mobilizing the masses by utilizing identity as an attraction for individuals to achieve the goals or interests of their group. The automation process of this identity is able to attract individuals who have the same religion, ethnicity and culture (Nurdin et al., 2019 Yuliawati & Nurohman 2018). This can also strengthen ethnocentric sentiment within groups, where those who are organized tend to feel superior to other groups.

Political identities, from both sociological and political perspectives, can generally be divided into two categories: social identities (such as religion, ethnicity, race, class, and gender). In a political context, this social identity influences how individuals position themselves in social relations. Identity is often manipulated by political situations and can be used as a tool to rally the masses in an attempt to take power.

Political identity reflects the way we identify with groups of people and the values we consider important. Meanwhile, social identity describes the way we view ourselves and other people in society. The combination of the two strengthens our political foundation. In Tasikmalaya City, identity politics, especially those related to religion, ideology and belief, have a strong influence on the political views of elites and society as a whole.

In the contemporary political era, the phenomenon of identity politics has become an important factor in the dynamics of Indonesian politics, especially in the city of Tasikmalaya. Religious symbols have become an integral part of mass movements and religious sentiments can quickly trigger reactions in a political context. Although the politicization of religion is nothing new in Indonesia, this phenomenon has become increasingly common and accepted in society.

The 2019 election was an important moment in which religious organizations participated in political campaigns, supporting candidates who were considered pro-Islamic and rejecting candidates who were considered enemies of Muslims. Religious figures in Tasikmalaya City are also influenced by the massive dissemination of information, tending to choose candidates who are in line with their religious beliefs (Mardani et al., 2023; Moriyama, 2015; Kusmayadi, 2018). Voter behavior in Tasikmalaya City tends to have a very strong religious dimension. Religious voters choose based on religious values and spiritual considerations as the basis of their choice. This reflects that religion plays a central role in determining political choices. Voter behavior is also influenced by social and cultural factors in the Tasikmalaya region. Election decisions cannot be separated from political issues, religious identity, or even identification with a social class or certain figure.

However, currently, there is no research that specifically examines the political behavior of kiai ahead of the 2024 General Election in Tasikmalaya City. Therefore, this research will try to fill this gap by analyzing the relationship between identity politics and kiai's political behavior in 2019 and linking it to kiai's attitudes and behavior in 2024. With a deeper understanding of these dynamics, it is hoped that it can help manage political potential identity in the democratic process in 2024.

2. Methodology

The research method used in this research is mixed method research, which combines qualitative and quantitative elements in the same research. This mixed approach allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The following are details of the research methods used:

a) Descriptive Method
   This research uses a descriptive method to describe the facts and phenomena that occur in society related to identity politics and the political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City ahead of the 2024 General Election. The descriptive method helps in understanding the relationships, activities, attitudes and views that exist happen.

b) Population and Sample
   The population of this study are kiai who are leaders of Islamic mass organizations or who have active Islamic boarding schools and Islamic studies in Tasikmalaya City, with a total of 95 people. Because the population is relatively small, the research uses a saturated sample, that is, the entire population is used as the sample.

c) Primary Data and Secondary Data
   Primary data was collected by filling in questionnaires distributed to respondents, namely the kiai. The questionnaire contains closed questions with the Guttman scale to collect quantitative data regarding the kiai's political behavior. Secondary data was obtained from existing documents and data related to kiai in Tasikmalaya City to support the analysis.

d) Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire will be analyzed statistically to identify patterns and trends in kiai's political behavior. Qualitative data from documents and secondary data will be analyzed descriptively to support the findings in the research.

By using this mixed approach, research can provide a more comprehensive picture of identity politics and kiai political behavior in Tasikmalaya City ahead of the 2024 General Election. This will help in understanding political dynamics in the region and the potential influence of identity politics on kiai behavior in the electoral context general.

3. Results and Discussion

This research was carried out using survey and interview methods with kiai in Tasikmalaya City, which was strengthened by literature studies from various reference sources. Respondents consisted of kiai who had Islamic boarding schools or congregations in the area, and they answered the questionnaire directly. The influence of identity politics on the political behavior of kiai is analyzed using indicators put forward by Surbakti, namely sacred (religious) and primordial (kinship and regional) identities. Meanwhile, to understand the political behavior of kiai, a behavioral political science approach is used with reference to three main approaches, namely the sociological approach (Columbia School), the Psychological approach (Michigan School), and the Rational approach (Virginia School).

Various previous studies have also examined voters' political behavior. From theoretical studies and interview results, the author succeeded in identifying the political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City ahead of the 2024 General Election. Voting behavior is how someone chooses what is considered the best choice. There are three main approaches to understanding voter behavior, namely sociological, psychological and rational, each of which has strengths and weaknesses. From the research results, it can be concluded that the political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City is influenced by these three approaches.

In the context of identity politics, kiai in Tasikmalaya City tend to consider sacred (religious) and primordial (kinship and regional) identity factors in selecting candidates. This is in accordance with the view that religion plays an important role in political decisions, especially for religious leaders such as kiai. Regional identity also plays a role, considering that kiai are often figures who have close ties to the local community.

It is important to remember that the influence of identity politics on kiai's political behavior is not absolute, and there are still other variables that can influence their political decisions. Therefore, this research provides an important initial picture for understanding the factors that influence the political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City ahead of the 2024 General Election.

3.1. The Influence of Religious Identity on Kiai's Political Behavior

The results of this research show that religious identity has a significant influence on the political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City. Statistically, the test results show that there is a positive and significant influence between religious identity (sacred identity) and the political behavior of kiai. This is in accordance with the view that religion plays an important role in political decisions, especially for religious leaders such as kiai.

The role of kiai in politics is very interesting to discuss because they have different faces in facing politics. Some kiai are directly involved in the regional head election process, while others focus more on creating conducive political conditions at the local level. The power of kiai in mobilizing society to engage in social and political activities is very important, especially in fighting identity politics which often exploits religious issues in general elections. It is important to note that the influence of religious identity on kiai's political behavior is not absolute, and there are still other variables that can influence their political decisions. However, the results of this research provide strong insight into how important religious factors are in shaping the identity and political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City.

Kiai in Tasikmalaya City tend to consider religious identity factors in choosing candidates, and they believe that leaders who share their faith will bring goodness, both in this world and in the afterlife. This reflects the close relationship between religion and politics in a society that is predominantly Muslim. Religion is not only an identity factor, but also a moral foundation in choosing potential leaders. In a broader context, the results of this research also reflect how strong the influence of religion is in politics, where people often act in accordance with their religious beliefs. Religious identity can be an important factor in influencing voting behavior, and this needs to be understood in the context of democracy and general elections.

3.2. The Influence of Kinship Identity on Kiai Political Behavior

The research results show that kinship identity (family or kinship relationship with the candidate) has a significant influence on the political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City. Thus, kinship identity plays an important role in the kiai's political decisions. This is in line with previous research findings which also show the influence of kinship identity in the political context. Kiai in Tasikmalaya City see kinship politics as one of the factors that can influence their political decisions. They tend to provide support to presidential candidates or legislative candidates who are

related to them or come from the same region. This reflects the importance of kinship factors in building political support among kiai.

The research results also show that regional identity (ethnicity or area of origin) also has a significant influence on kiai's political behavior. Kiai tend to provide support to candidates who come from the same area or have the same ethnicity or tribe. This factor is also an important consideration in their political decisions. However, it is important to remember that kinship and regional identity are only some of the factors that influence kiai's political behavior. There are still other factors such as religious identity which were discussed previously which also have a significant influence. Overall, kiai's political behavior is influenced by a variety of complex factors, and the results of this study provide useful insights into these factors.

Apart from that, this research also illustrates the existence of political dynamics among kiai, where they have different roles in politics, including in regional head elections. Social and political changes in Islamic boarding school communities also occur, and this reflects the complexity in the relationship between politics and religion in Indonesia. It is important to continue to understand the political dynamics of kiai and how factors such as religious identity, kinship, and regionalism influence their political decisions. This will help in understanding the role of kiai in local and national politics and their impact on society and the political system as a whole.

In recapitulating the influence of the identity political variable indicator (X) on the kiai's political behavior variable (Y), it can be seen that religious identity has the greatest influence on the political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City, followed by kinship identity, and then regional or ethnic identity. This means that religious identity is the dominant factor in influencing the political decisions of kiai in the region. Results of interviews with K.H. Fathullah Mansur (Abah Fatah) and other religious figures also support this finding. They emphasized the importance of religious identity in shaping the political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City. This is in line with the characteristics of Tasikmalaya City, which is known as the "Student City" with a fairly large Islamic boarding school population.

Apart from that, this research also shows that religious identity has a significant influence in shaping the political behavior of kiai. This identity includes support for presidential and legislative candidates based on the same religion, a pious personality, and the same understanding of religion/beliefs. This reflects how strong the influence of religious identity is in the political context in Tasikmalaya City.

However, kinship and regional identity also have a significant influence, although it is lower than religious identity. Kinship identity includes support for presidential candidates and legislative candidates based on kinship relationships, while regional identity includes support because of the same ethnicity/tribe or region of origin.

Thus, these findings illustrate the complexity in the influence of various identity factors in shaping the political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City. Even though religious identity dominates, kinship and regional identity also have a significant role in their political decisions.

Apart from that, the research results also show that these three factors of political identity, namely religious, kinship and regional identity, simultaneously have a significant influence on kiai's political behavior. With the Fcount value being much greater than Ftable, this confirms that these three identity factors together influence the political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City.

The results of this research provide a better understanding of the factors that influence the political behavior of kiai in the region and how the complexity of identity politics plays out in this context. It also underscores the important role of kiai in local and national politics and their influence on society and the political system as a whole.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion of this research is that religious identity has the greatest influence on the political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City, followed by kinship identity, and then regional or ethnic identity. Religious identity is the dominant factor in influencing the political decisions of kiai in the region, which is in line with the characteristics of Tasikmalaya City as a "Santri City" with a fairly large Islamic boarding school population.

Apart from religious identity, kinship and regional identity also have a significant influence in shaping the political behavior of kiai. Kinship identity includes support for presidential candidates and legislative candidates based on kinship relationships, while regional identity includes support because of the same ethnicity/tribe or region of origin.

The research results also show that these three political identity factors, namely religious identity, kinship and regionalism, simultaneously have a significant influence on kiai's political behavior. This confirms that these three identity factors together influence the political behavior of kiai in Tasikmalaya City.

This research provides a better understanding of the factors that influence the political behavior of kiai in the region and the complexity of identity politics in this context. It also emphasizes the important role of kiai in local and national politics and their influence on society and the political system as a whole. In a political context, religious identity and kinship are the main factors that shape kiai's political preferences, with regional identity also having a significant impact.

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