

Islam and Identity Politics After the 2024 Presidential Election: The Islamic Students of Gen Z in Perspective

Ajrun 'Azhim Al As'hal¹, Ita Rodiah²

UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email: ajrunazhimalashal31@gmail.com¹, ita.rodiah@uin-suka.ac.id²

Abstract

This research examines the perspective of Islamic students of Gen Z towards identity politics after the 2024 election. The issue of identity politics is a popular and hot issue among society today. This research aims to discuss the impacts that occur after identity politics and the views of Islamic students' Gen Z towards identity politics after the 2024 election. The method used is qualitative research using a descriptive approach. The research techniques used are observation, interviews and documentation. The result of this research is that identity politics can threaten the integrity and unity of the nation because the existence of identity politics makes society divided and gen z also has a variety of opinions about the issue of identity politics, but most of them disagree with the existence of candidates who use identity politics issues in election contestation. This issue should not be used in political activities because it makes religion a tool to gain votes from Gen Z

Keywords: identity politics, post-election of 2024, islamic students of gen z

INTRODUCTION

The studies of identity politics have been discussed by previous researchers, such as Aryojati Ardipandanto (2020), that discussing the impact of identity politics in the 2019 presidential election based on populism, which resulted in populism in the 2019 presidential election being dangerous because it ignores national heterogeneity, especially when it is supported by the rise of hoax news and is not balanced with maturity of Indonesian society. Anifatul Kiftiyah (2019) researched efforts to reconcile identity politics after the 2019 election. Revealed that identity politics would be dangerous if it led to discrimination among the people, so there was a need for reconciliation initiated by the election contestants. According to Rendy Adiwilaga et al. (2017), elections and the inevitability of ethnic identity politics in Indonesia: a theoretical review. This research explains that the existence of ethnic identity politics must be seen as a local wisdom that is able to maintain cultural unity and harmony in Indonesia. Islam is known by a statement of the *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which refers to a religion that is full of compassion, loves peace, and upholds brotherhood (Khairan Muhammad Arif, 2021). However, some people, even groups, deliberately use religion, especially Islam, as a tool to spread hatred and hostility (Siti Faridah & Jerico Mathias, 2018). In fact, they do not hesitate to use religious issues for purely political purposes. The issue of identity politics is one of the issues currently being widely discussed by Indonesian society. Since the nomination of the three presidential and vice presidential candidates until after the general

election, this issue has become increasingly widely reported. Starting from the emergence of Tarwiyah, who is a mother and PKS legislative candidate who demonstrated in front of the KPU (Republika, 2023) to what just happened during Eid al-Fitr prayers at Tamanan Square, Banguntapan, Bantul, where Ustadz Untung Cahyono as the preacher touched on political issues and fraud. 2024 election in his sermon (Detik.com, 2024).

The Ministry of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia (KOMINFO), through the Deputy Minister of Communication and Information, Nezar Patria, explained that from July 1 2023, to January 24 2024, there are 195 cases of hoax news and narratives about identity politics regarding elections had been found spread across 2,825 pieces of content (KOMINFO, 2024). Even though there is a decrease compared to the previous election, the use of this issue is still often used to defeat opponents (fight for beat). Apart from that, the issue of identity politics is also used as a tool to gain voters' votes. Gen Z and Millennials are one of the targets for political elites to gain votes. Because in the 2024 election, Gen Z and millennial voters will be the most significant number of permanent voters in Indonesia that is 55% (KPU, 2024). This statement is in line with a researcher from BRIN, Aisah Putri Budiarti, who said that political parties currently still consider the votes of young voters, especially Generation Z and millennials, as something that must be achieved but not as an interested group (BBC.com, 2024). Research on Islam and post-election identity politics from the perspective of Islamic students of Gen Z is necessary. There are 2 main reasons underlying this research. First, the issue of identity politics raised by political elites indirectly tarnishes Islam, even though Islam always upholds the values of tolerance and peace, so this situation is like two different sides of a coin. Second, as a concrete form of the active role of young voters, especially Gen Z, in election contestation, young voters are only considered an apathetic generation, let alone only used as vote-getters for candidate pairs and political parties. Therefore, this research focuses on the perspective of Gen Z students towards Islam and identity politics after the 2024 election. This research aims to dissect what impacts are caused by identity politics after the 2024 election and what the views of Gen Z students, who in fact are the generation that has Sufficient knowledge of religious knowledge in viewing identity politics after the 2024 election.

2. METHODS

This research uses qualitative methods with descriptive research. Qualitative research is research that has the aim of knowing and understanding the phenomena and events that occur by research subjects such as actions, perceptions or views, motivations, and so on (Moelong, 2017). The types and sources used by researchers are through direct collection from informants consisting

of 7 Islamic students of Gen Z with an age range of 19-25 years. They are tahfidz students from the Al-Munawwir Islamic Boarding School, Krapyak, Yogyakarta, who have memorized more than 10 Juz of the Qur'an. With details: M. Agta Annafi Sugiyantoro, Farid Dihan Nahdi, M. Najwan Abiq, Rafa Ghani, Ahmad Zaki Yahya, Amri Faizal, and Adnan Prabowo. Supporting data for this research was also obtained from reference sources, related literature, newspapers and other materials by the study theme. Collection techniques are techniques used to obtain data (Sugiyono, 2018). The research was conducted from 27 April to 05 May 2024.

This research technique uses 3 methods observation, namely, the researcher directly observes the research object in order to obtain the information needed; interviews, namely, the researcher conducts interviews with related informants in order to obtain answers to the questions that have been created to obtain maximum results. And finally, documentation is using methods to search for data regarding things in the form of notes, newspapers, journals, books, etc. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique used uses the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, where, at this stage, the researcher takes notes from the data obtained and then simplifies it. Then the data presentation is done by selecting similar data before converting it into text. Finally, conclusions are drawn which aim to obtain credible conclusions to answer questions in the field (Sugiyono, 2018)

3. RESULTS

3.1 Politic Literacy of Islamic Gen Z in the 2024 Presidential Election

Generation Z is one of the largest voters in the 2024 election. Generation Z's understanding of politics comes from the news on social media, starting with YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. According to one informant, he got the current political issues, from elections to election disputes, from social media.

"I know all the political news from social media. I rarely watch TV so I only get news from social media." (M. Agta Annafi B./01/05/2024)

Agta also explained everything he knew about politics during the election, starting with the feud between Jokowi and PDI-P and ending with why Prabowo had the most votes among the other candidate pairs.

"This election is very interesting because there are 3 candidate pairs competing, very different from last year when there were only 2 candidate pairs. Apart from that, what was interesting was right before the election because there was conflict between Jokowi and PDI-P over which one was

superior, the election of Cak Imin as Anis' deputy who directly defeated AHY, the reason why Prabowo was able to win by a landslide. Starting from Prabowo having his own voice, continuing with the entry of Gibran, it is impossible for the Democrats to want to join the candidate pair with Megawati, Jokowi's loyalty in the PDI-P is still highest, as proven in the election, the PDI-P won the parliament but lost in the presidential election, the existence of Ahok as a true Islamist. it's possible that Cak Imin entered candidate pair 1 to reduce Anis's vote, PKB's vote was divided, the proof is that Khofifah supports Prabowo-Gibran, Ganjar has too many mistakes, and my funniest opinion is Ganjar's votes is not his, but all of the votes is purely from prof mahfud's votes" (M. Agta Annafi B./01/05/2024)

Not only that, even Farid Dihan Nahdi, an informant, explained clearly the political strategies carried out by the candidate pairs, starting from Anis, who is identical to Habib Riziq Syihab, until Ganjar, who appears like a populist.

"The candidate pairs have their own ways of attracting voters. If Anis Baswedan is identical to Habib Riziq Syihab (HRS). even Ganjar Pranowo, who always tries to be the face of the people, even though he failed due to the political machine's half-hearted support for him, and Prabowo, who is synonymous with being firm and military." (Farid Dihan Nahdi/02/05/2024)

Another informant also expressed the same thing, adding that during the election, there was a lot of hate speech, hoax news, and even discrimination between races. He believes that election contestation will not be free from the shadow of dirty methods to gain votes from other voters.

"A lot of hoax news has emerged during the 2024 election. There are a lot of them on social media. Usually, the target is another candidate pair he feels superior to him. Then, it cannot be separated from the SARA politics, which are usually used every time there is a presidential or regional head election. "The aim is also the same to attack political opponents, and the last one is the issue of discrimination." (Najwan Abiq/01/05/2024)

Adnan Prabowo, who was also one of the informants, explained that he actually knew quite a lot about the political polemics in Indonesia. Although he believes that politics at this time is still quite conducive and calm compared to previous politics. Even so, he is excited about the 2024 election.

"The election is quite conducive now compared to last year, however I am still quite annoyed by everything that is happening" (Adnan Prabowo 03/05/2024)

The statements made by the informants prove that Islamic Gen Z has an interest in knowing politics in Indonesia. They also know and understand what issues are currently happening in Indonesia. Understanding political literacy also makes Islamic Gen Z not just someone who is

apathetic and doesn't want to know about their own country. Even just as a tool to gain votes by the political elite. However, Gen Z, especially Islamic boarding school students, have a big role in Indonesia's progress. Because 1 vote can determine the future for Indonesia for 5 years.



Picture 1 The Example of Political News in Social Media

(Source: @pinterpolitic on instagram)

The picture above is an example of news about politics during the 2024 election period on social media Instagram. The poster shown discusses the problem of the continuing decline in Ganjar's votes in the electability of the presidential and vice presidential candidate pairs. Even though PDI-P is still predicted to be the winning of political party.

3.2 The Perspective of Islamic Gen Z in Indentity Politic

Identity politics is an issue that is used by candidate pairs and political party leaders every election to gain votes. They use the issue of identity politics to attract votes, especially from Muslims and also young voters, one of whom is Gen Z. There are still many people who think that Gen Z is only a tool to get a big vote. Additionally, in the 2024 election, millennial and Gen Z voters reached more than 50 per cent of the votes. Therefore, all strategies are used by candidate pairs and parties to attract voters to choose their candidate pairs and parties. One of them is by using religious issues. Even though Islam prohibits this act. In line with this statement, M. Agta Annafi B, as the informant, stated that

"Religion as a guide to life definitely teaches good values. Islam as rahmatan lil 'alamin which always upholds the values of tolerance (tasamuh), does not divide, unites with each other." (M. Agta Annafi B./01/05/2024)

Amri Faizal as the informant also added a statement from Agta explaining the function of Islam itself,

"Islam as a religion that is a mercy for all of nature that saves humans from evil" (Amri Faizal/04/05/2024)

These two statements prove that Islam is a religion that always prioritizes peace and love of peace. There is never an Al-Qur'an or hadith that explains the Islamic religion, which teaches about division and hostility between humans, especially fellow Muslims. However, in reality, the use of religious issues as identity politics is still considered normal.

"Islam prohibits identity politics because it is contrary to the principles of that religion, such as: universal brotherhood, justice and tolerance." (Najwan Abiq/01/05/2024)

According to Farid Dihan Nahdi and Rafa Ghani, they have views on the meaning of identity politics itself.

"Identity politics is a method of gaining power by associating individuals and parties with a specific characteristic. For example: religion, nationalism, and also labor" (Farid Dihan Nahdi/02/05/2024)

"Identity politics is a phenomenon where individuals or groups identify themselves based on certain characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other factors that are used as a basis for identity to participate in the political process or to fight for their interests." (Rafa Ghani/01/05/2024)

They both also explained their views as Gen Z students regarding the identity politics used by candidate pairs.

"The number of millions of students is actually a dead voice because their voices are under the control of the boarding school leaders. The strategy used by candidate pair 1 won a lot in Islamic boarding schools, but lost with the veto vote of one of the most senior Tariqoh murshids in Indonesia." (Farid Dihan Nahdi/02/05/2024)

"Islamic Gen Z views on identity politics can vary depending on their background and personal experiences. Some may prioritize religious or ethnic values, while others may be more inclined to seek agreement and cooperation across groups." (Rafa Ghani/01/05/2024)

However, this is different from the views of Najwan Abiq and Ahmad Zaki Yahya, who said that the majority of students would fight,

" Islamic Gen Z are generally aware of the dangers of identity politics and are committed to fighting it." (Najwan Abiq/01/05/2024)

"Identity politics is not actually a big deal because identity politics has actually been carried out by everyone without exception" (Ahmad Zaki Yahya/01/05/2024)

Even though there are many opinions about the emergence of religious issues in the 2024 election contestation, most of them agree that identity politics should not be used to gain votes. The beginning of emergence of identity politics during the 2024 election began with individuals who stated that if they did not support the candidate pair they supported, their Islamic beliefs would be doubted.

"Before the election took place, we heard that there were candidate pairs who said that if you don't vote for candidate pair 1 then you will be doubted about your Nu and Islam." (M. Agta Annafi B./01/05/2024)

This situation has had an enormous impact on Indonesia. Not only does it divide the nation, but it can also delay the country's progress because of the identity politics involved.

"After the 2024 election, if identity politics continues, there is a possibility of social tension, great political polarization, and what is worse is the difficulty of achieving agreement to advance the national agenda" (Rafa Ghani/01/05/2024)

The results of the interview above explain the various perspectives of Islamic Gen Z regarding identity politics, especially religious issues, which are used as a tool to gain votes from voters, especially young voters. They argue that the issue of identity politics actually exists and is used by each candidate pair themselves. However, the levels used are different. According to them, identity politics will exist in every election contestation. Moreover, the issue of identity politics is packaged as a religious issue. They all agree that the impact of identity politics is very large, ranging from group divisions to the difficulty of moving this country forward.



The picture shows the participation of Generation Z, especially Islamic boarding school students, making the 2024 election contest a success. This situation is also evidence to refute the statement that Generation Z is only a source of votes for candidate pairs. In fact, it is not uncommon for Generation Z to openly support one of the candidate pairs they deem worthy of becoming president.

"Generation Z is actually very loyal and has high hopes for the elected president. So the involvement and activeness of Generation Z regarding the 2024 election is quite high." (Adnan Prabowo 03/05/2024)

This is proven by the many views or perceptions of Islamic Gen Z regarding the 2024 election, especially regarding the identity politics promoted by candidate pair 1. However, from these results, most of the Gen Z perceptions are that they reject the existence of political issues brought up by candidate pairs in the election contestation.

4. DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Islam and Identity Politics in Indonesia

Islam is one of the religions with the most adherents in the world. Reporting from Global Muslim Population data uploaded by Times Prayer until February 2 2024, at 13.30 WIB, the Muslim population in the world has reached 2,022,131,798 out of a total world population of 8,088,527 people. This situation puts Islam after Christianity (Detik.Com, 2024). Meanwhile, Indonesia the second largest Muslim population after Pakistan, which is 236 million people (CNBC, 2024). Islam has always branded itself as a religion that teaches to be gentle in speaking, always loving, and full of compassion towards fellow humans, especially fellow Muslims, so it is known as Islam *rahmatan lil 'Alamin* (Khairan Muhammad Arif, 2021). Islam and politics actually have a connection between the two. The relationship between religion and politics is not only limited to political parties that declare themselves to be religious parties, such as PKB, PPP, PKS and the Umat Party (Agus Saputro, 2019). However, the two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, NU and Muhammadiyah, are also at the forefront in maintaining the integrity and unity of the Indonesian people.

In practice, politics is still considered by some people to be something bad, cunning, or even dirty (Agus Saputro, 2023). This stigma and assumption is not something strange because the basis they use is a feeling of disappointment with the authorities and political elites regarding the policies and governance carried out. As a country that adheres to a democratic system, Indonesia will never be free from the existence of rulers and political parties. Political parties are a pillar of democracy and the sovereignty of the people themselves (Evi Purnamawati, 2020). This is of course the basis for the implementation of direct democracy through general elections (elections) to elect the president and vice president, regional heads, and members of the council (Detik, 2023). The 2024 election is a form of implementing democracy carried out by Indonesia. In this election, all people have the same political rights. Since the beginning of the candidacy for president and vice president as well as members of the legislative council, the public has been presented with various campaign models. Not only interactive campaigns, but several political parties and also candidate pairs openly carry out black campaigns against fellow candidate pairs.

The rejection banner for one of the candidate pairs, namely Anis Baswedan, at Simpang Tiga Jalan Colonel Sugiono, Yogyakarta City, on Thursday (19/5/2023) is an example of a black campaign carried out by irresponsible individuals (Kompas.Com, 2023). This situation also happened to candidate pair number two, namely Prabowo Subianto, who received wild rumours that Prabowo had slapped and strangled Deputy Minister of Agriculture Harvick (VIVA, 2023). Apart

from that, identity politics is also spreading massively in society. The use of religious issues to overthrow political opponents has now become something that is considered commonplace in order to bring down political opponents. For example, in the case of Abah Aos, who is one of the supporters of the candidate pair, he stated that Anis Baswedan was the Imam Mahdi, and he even ordered his student named Eka Anugrah to help the candidate pair by handing over 100 cars as a form of obedience to his spiritual teacher (Suara.com, 2024). This situation clearly shows that Abah Aos used the word imam mahdi to attract the support and attention of the community, especially Muslims.

Identity politics relies on tribal and religious fanaticism, which is always vulnerable to being played with and used as a political tool (Siti Faridah & Jerico Mathias, 2018). Jerry Indrawan et al. (2023) explain that identity politics will never be separated from the meaning of that identity because identity or self-identity includes gender identity, race, work, religion, and so on. This situation indirectly tarnishes Islam. Because Islam, which is supposed to be a holy religion, cannot be used as a means of justification for doing something, especially politics (Siti Faridah & Jerico Mathias, 2018). Even though it is clear in the Al-Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah Verse 256, which states that *"There is no compulsion to (enter) religion (Islam), in fact the right path is clearer than the wrong path. Therefore, whoever disbelieves in Thaghut and believes in Allah, then indeed he has held on to Allah, then indeed he has held on to a very strong rope that will not break. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing."* It is evidence in Surah Al-Baqarah that Allah never forces other people to convert to Islam. However, in reality, religious issues force people to choose one of the candidate pairs.



Picture 3 The one of Khatib in The Eid Prayer who Discusses the Election
(Source: kumparan on TikTok)

The picture is of one of the Eid al-Fitr prayer preachers on April 10 2024, named Ustadz Untung Cahyono, who was on duty as a prayer preacher at Tamanan Square, Banguntapan, Yogyakarta, openly discussing political issues and fraud in the 2024 election.

4.2 The Phenomenon Politic Identity After Election 2024 in Perspective of Islamic Gen Z

Religious education institutions, especially Islamic boarding schools, are still an alternative for parents to entrust their children to study religion. Not only are religious sciences taught in Islamic boarding schools, but also character education. Most recently, Islamic boarding schools offer formal and informal teaching, which includes general subjects such as mathematics, science, social sciences, languages, technology, and so on (Muhammad Fredy Kurniawan, 2023). In recent years, Islamic boarding schools have been filled with Generation Z. Generation Z is a term given to the generation born from 1995-2012, living an increasingly advanced era with rapidly developing technology (Heti Aisah & Uus Ruswandi, 2020). Through learning at Islamic boarding schools, students, especially Generation Z, can understand religious knowledge and, at the same time practice Islamic teachings in their daily lives.

These advantages make Islamic Gen Z have more capital and advantages compared to Gen Z students who have not received Islamic education. Although there are many assumptions that Gen Z students are only good at religious knowledge. For example, many students occupy important positions ranging from parliament to public officials. Even the General Chair of the National Awakening Party (PKB) DPP Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar confirmed as many as 4,000 santri to become members of the Indonesian Santri Laskar to prepare young cadres from Islamic boarding schools to become future leaders (Antara, 2022). This proves that santri have a strategic role apart from being a religious leader. Apart from that, Islamic Gen Z also made a big contribution to politics in Indonesia in the 2024 election contestation. This election is a bit interesting compared to the previous election. Because in the 2024 election, young voters will be the largest most significant number of permanent voters in Indonesia compared to previous years. Young voters reached 56.45% with the details of 33.60% for millennial voters and 22.85% for Gen Z voters (Detik, 2024).

This large number of voters means that presidential and vice presidential candidates and political elites are competing to attract the votes of Generation Z. As was done by the Prabowo-Gibran couple who used *gemoy* imagery and creative gimmicks to attract the attention of young voters, especially Gen Z (Nadya Hapsari Thrisianingsih Sukandar et al, 2024). Another strategy that is also used to get the votes of Generation Z, especially those who are Muslim, is by using the issue of identity politics. The phenomenon of identity politics issues always exists in every election

contestation. The issue of identity politics always uses political interests which are then added with verses and religious symbols. So that people who hear it will be lulled by heavenly promises (Andre Pebrian Perdana & Muslih, 2023). Even though Allah has said in Qs. Al-Baqarah verse 41 *“regarding the prohibition on selling Allah's verses at low prices”*. The meaning of this verse is to threaten anyone who uses verses from the Koran to exchange them for worldly matters that have nothing to do with Allah SWT.

The issue of identity politics itself is very attached to the number 1 candidate pair, Anis Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar in attracting votes, especially among Gen Z voters and also Muslims. Even though they denied using this issue (CNN, 2023). However, there is a lot of evidence that proves that they use identity political issues, such as conducting campaigns at mosques. They think that the strategy used will be successful because the majority of Indonesia's adherents are Muslim. However, it seems that this situation is not always right. The issue of identity politics itself not only occurs before the election occurs but is also carried out after the voting. Many individuals did not accept the defeat that befell the candidate pair they supported. Even worse than before the election occurred. Just mention Tarwiyah, as well as individuals acting on behalf of Aksi 164, Joint Forum (Forbes) 01 and 03, PDR Front, and so on (detik.com, 2024).

They held a large-scale demonstration in the Horse statue area, Central Jakarta, during the Constitutional Court hearing. Even former Minister of Religion Fachrul Razi and Former Danjen Kopassus Soenarko also took part in the big action held by this mass organization, and they said that they had the same vision, mission and goals, namely upholding justice and eradicating injustice (Tempo, 2024). Soenarno also discussed the fraud that occurred during the 2024 election. He asked the Constitutional Court to accept the petition submitted by candidate pairs 1 and 3. They claimed that the election results were fraudulent and that the winner had already been determined. The events had many major social effects on the unity and integrity of Indonesia (Aryojati Ardipandanto, 2019). Identity politics does not only impact the integrity and unity of the country. However, it also has a broad impact on the progress of this country and divides society into specific groups. In fact, identity politics also influences religious tolerance in Indonesia, so many people disagree with identity politics (Muhammad Jeral Palepa, et al. 2024).

This situation is also felt by Generation Z. Many people still think that Gen Z doesn't know anything about political issues, but in reality that is not true. They have various opinions, perceptions, and reactions. Most Islamic Gen Z think that identity politics has actually been carried out by all candidate pairs. The existence of identity politics actually threatens the integrity of the state. However, some say that identity politics is not that big of a problem if it doesn't get a big

response. Islamic Gen Z also believe that identity politics, both before and after the election, will still exist. In fact, they assume that in every election there will be a religious issue brought up by one of the candidate pairs. However, they all agree that identity politics should not be brought into a general election contest. Because the impact caused is also quite large. This situation proves that Gen Z understands and is active in the issues and problems in the 2024 election. So this statement also denies the views of political elites who state that easy voters, especially Gen Z, are only a means of gaining votes.



Picture 4 The one of Grand Mother who Speech in MK

(Source: Mahrus Ali on TikTok)

Figure 4 shows one of the grandmothers giving a speech in front of the Constitutional Court building to demand fraud in the election. In his oration he used the words jihad and also knocking on Allah's door, dzalim, and other words that had religious elements.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Religious issues, especially Islam, are still the priority for political party officials to gain votes. Not before the election starts but also after the election occurs. In fact, identity politics has many negative impacts on the nation and state. Starting from threatening the integrity and unity of the country to dividing society. These individuals use the issue of identity politics to influence voters, especially Gen Z. Because they still think that Gen Z is still ignorant and even apathetic towards the world of politics. Even though Gen Z currently really understands and is also active on this issue. In fact, most of them openly oppose the issue of identity politics being promoted by one of the candidate pairs.

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