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ARTICLE

Fostering Political Awareness Among Muslim Women Through Muslim Women's Community Activities in the 2024 Regional Elections

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Abstract

Electoral politics at the local level does not operate solely through political parties, campaigns, and formal political education, but also through everyday interactions within religious communities. This study examines how political awareness among Muslimat NU women in Sumurjalak Village, Tuban Regency, is constructed, negotiated, and internalised through community activities during the 2024 regional elections. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the study draws on in-depth interviews with 3 (three) active Muslimat NU members, participant observation, and documentary analysis. The data were analyzed thematically, while Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's social construction framework was used as the analytical perspective. The findings show that activities such as *pengajian, tahlilan, arisan*, and informal conversations provide social spaces in which women exchange political information, assess leadership qualities, and relate electoral choices to religious values such as honesty, justice, responsibility, and trustworthiness. Through repeated interaction, these values become collective points of reference for evaluating political leaders, strengthening independent political judgment, and rejecting transactional politics. The study demonstrates that political awareness is socially produced through the intersection of religion, gendered interaction, community organization, and local politics. The implication of this study is that Muslim women's religious organizations should be understood as significant informal arenas of political socialization, women's agency, and grassroots democratic participation.

Keywords: Political Awareness; Muslim Women's Community; Social Construction; Women's Participation; Informal Political Education

Politik elektoral di tingkat lokal tidak hanya berlangsung melalui partai, kampanye, dan pendidikan politik formal, tetapi juga melalui interaksi sehari-hari dalam komunitas keagamaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana kesadaran politik perempuan Muslimat NU di Desa Sumurjalak, Kabupaten Tuban dikonstruksi, dinegosiasikan, dan diinternalisasi melalui aktivitas komunitas dalam konteks Pemilihan Kepala Daerah 2024. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan wawancara mendalam terhadap 3 (tiga) anggota aktif Muslimat NU, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis secara tematik dengan menggunakan kerangka konstruksi sosial Peter L. Berger dan Thomas Luckmann sebagai perspektif analitis. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kegiatan seperti pengajian, tahlilan, arisan, dan percakapan informal menjadi ruang sosial bagi perempuan untuk bertukar informasi politik, menilai kualitas kepemimpinan, serta menghubungkan pilihan politik dengan nilai keagamaan seperti kejujuran, keadilan, tanggung jawab, dan amanah. Melalui interaksi yang berulang, nilai-nilai tersebut berkembang menjadi rujukan kolektif dalam menilai pemimpin, membangun kemandirian pilihan politik, dan menolak praktik politik transaksional. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kesadaran politik merupakan proses sosial yang dibentuk melalui persinggungan antara agama, interaksi gender, organisasi komunitas, dan politik lokal. Implikasi penelitian ini adalah pentingnya organisasi keagamaan perempuan sebagai ruang informal bagi sosialisasi politik, pembentukan agensi perempuan, dan partisipasi demokratis di tingkat akar rumput.

A. INTRODUCTION

The 2024 regional elections brought electoral politics into everyday social spaces in rural Indonesia, including religious communities that are not formally organized as political institutions. In Sumurjalak Village, Plumpang Subdistrict, Tuban Regency, Muslimat NU is embedded in women's everyday social and religious life through regular activities such as *pengajian*, *tahlilan*, *arisan*, organizational meetings, and community gatherings. Ahead of the regional elections, these spaces also became settings where women exchanged information about candidates, discussed leadership qualities, evaluated political promises, and linked electoral choices to religious values such as honesty, justice, responsibility, and trustworthiness. Political awareness in this setting therefore does not emerge exclusively through political parties, electoral campaigns, formal civic education, or mass media, but is also embedded in routine social interaction within a religious community. This empirical setting raises a broader question of how apparently non-political religious activities can become everyday spaces where women interpret political issues and develop criteria for political judgment.

This issue becomes particularly significant because women's political participation in Indonesia continues to unfold within overlapping religious, cultural, and gendered structures. Women are increasingly present in electoral politics, yet patriarchal norms, unequal political resources, gender stereotypes, and limited access to formal political networks continue to shape their opportunities for participation (Adriani and Maulia 2024; Lestari and Pratiwi 2024). For Muslim women at the grassroots level, these structural constraints do not necessarily produce political passivity; instead, political engagement may develop through socially legitimate spaces already available to them. Muslimat NU provides such a setting because religious gatherings simultaneously sustain social networks, circulate moral knowledge, and create

opportunities for women to discuss community affairs. The empirical problem, therefore, is not simply whether Muslim women participate in politics, but how religiously embedded everyday interactions shape what they understand as good leadership, legitimate political behavior, civic responsibility, and acceptable forms of political participation.

Existing scholarship has approached the relationship between Muslim women, religious organizations, and politics from several directions. Historical and community-based studies show that Muslimat NU has long been involved in electoral politics and political education, and that its organisational networks have provided women with resources for participation and political understanding (Isnaeniyah 2017; Abidah and Kartono 2019; Ilman and Nugroho Aji 2020; Mahsun, Elizabeth, and Mufrikhah 2021). Broader studies of Indonesian electoral politics similarly demonstrate that women's political participation is shaped not only by formal quotas but also by unequal access to political capital, patriarchal structures, women's networks, and the strategic use of Islamic social resources (Prihatini 2020; Aspinall, White, and Savirani 2021). At the same time, studies of Muslim women's religious organizations demonstrate that women's pious spaces are not socially detached from public life: religious practices can provide public legitimacy for women, enable the renegotiation of gender roles, and simultaneously reproduce and reshape organizational norms surrounding Muslim womanhood (Millie 2021; Syamsiyatun 2022; Zinira, Udasmoro, and Azca 2023; Shin, Lew, and Seo 2024). Taken together, this literature has generated substantial knowledge about women's representation, electoral mobilization, clientelism, organizational participation, religious identity, and gendered agency, while directing less analytical attention to the everyday social processes through which political meanings themselves are constructed within grassroots religious communities.

Despite this growing scholarship, limited attention has been given to the micro-social process through which Muslim women construct political awareness through routine interactions in grassroots religious communities, particularly in the context of local electoral politics. To address this gap, this study examines how Muslimat NU women in Sumurjalak Village construct, negotiate, and internalize political awareness through community activities during the 2024 regional elections, using Berger and Luckmann's social construction framework. Examining this process matters because it shows how religious communities can function as informal arenas of political learning in which women interpret electoral information, negotiate gendered constraints, and develop moral criteria for political participation beyond formal political institutions. Sociologically, this study contributes to understanding political awareness as a socially constructed and gendered process situated at the intersection of religion, everyday interaction, community organization, and local democratic participation.

B. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive study, aiming to deeply understand the process of political awareness formation among Muslimat NU women through community activities in the context of the 2024 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada). This approach was chosen because it is able to capture subjective meanings, value constructions, and social experiences experienced by individuals in their natural social context. The research was conducted in Sumurjalak Village, Plumpang Subdistrict, Tuban Regency, East Java, an area with an active Muslimat NU community in social and religious activities. The theoretical framework used is the social construction theory of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, which explains that social reality is formed through three main processes: externalisation (the expression of values in social

actions), objectification (the collective acceptance of values as norms), and internalisation (the absorption of these values into individual consciousness). This theory is relevant for analyzing how women's political consciousness is formed not through formal education or the media, but through daily social interactions within religious communities.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Informants were selected purposively, consisting of three Muslimat NU members who actively participated in various community activities such as religious study groups, social gatherings, *tahlilan* (prayer gatherings), and organizational meetings. These three informants were selected because of their active involvement and ability to express their views and values, making them representative of the process of political awareness formation in the community. They also have diverse social backgrounds, ranging from productive age to old age, as well as different roles in the Muslimat organizational structure, which adds depth to the perspectives in the data obtained.

The focus on the Muslimat NU community was chosen because this organization has strong religious and historical legitimacy and functions as a dynamic cultural space at the local level. Muslimat NU plays an important role in shaping the collective morality of women, especially in relation to leadership, social responsibility, and political participation. This organization creates an influential informal space for combining religious values with civic awareness in women's daily lives. The data were analyzed using a thematic approach based on the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The main themes identified include perceptions of ideal leaders, religious values as the basis for political choices, and resistance to transactional politics. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of techniques and sources, as well as re-confirmation of

interview results with informants (member check) to ensure that data interpretation was consistent with the social reality they experienced.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's theory of the social construction of reality, which views social reality as continuously produced and reproduced through human interaction. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that everyday reality is not simply given to individuals as an objective fact; rather, it is created through shared meanings, habitual practices, social interaction, and institutional processes. Knowledge in everyday life therefore becomes sociologically significant because it provides individuals with interpretive schemes through which they understand themselves, other people, and the social world. From this perspective, political awareness is not an individual psychological attribute or merely as knowledge of electoral institutions. It is understood as a socially constructed orientation that develops through repeated interaction, shared interpretations, and socially recognized definitions of appropriate political conduct.

Berger and Luckmann conceptualize this relationship between individuals and society through the dialectical processes of externalisation, objectification, and internalisation. Externalisation refers to the process through which individuals express meanings, values, and interpretations through social action; objectification occurs when these meanings become recurrent, socially shared, and experienced as an established reality; and internalisation refers to the process through which individuals absorb this socially constructed reality into their own consciousness (Berger and Luckmann 1966). These processes are analytically interconnected rather than separate chronological stages. Applied to political awareness, religious interpretations of honesty, justice, trustworthiness, leadership, and public responsibility may initially be

articulated through conversations and religious activities, become normalised through repeated interaction within a community, and eventually be internalised as criteria through which individuals for evaluating political actors and electoral practices.

Religion is particularly important in this process because it can provide socially authoritative systems of meaning through which people interpret and legitimise everyday experience. Berger (1967) describes religion as a powerful mechanism of world construction and legitimation that situates social practices within a broader moral and symbolic order. Religious meanings can therefore make particular understandings of leadership, obligation, justice, or wrongdoing appear socially legitimate and morally compelling. In the context of Muslimat NU, religious teachings should not be treated simply as fixed doctrines that mechanically determine political choices. Rather, they can be examined as symbolic resources interpreted, communicated, and socially reproduced within communal settings, thereby contributing to the construction of legitimate understandings of political responsibility and appropriate electoral behaviour.

Luckmann's (1967) account of religion further extends this perspective by emphasizing that religious meaning is not confined to formal religious institutions or explicit theological doctrines. Religion can operate through everyday systems of meaning that provide individuals with frameworks for interpreting social life and constructing identity. This insight is relevant to community activities such as *pengajian*, *tahlilan*, *arisan*, and informal conversations, where political discussion may emerge without these activities becoming explicitly political institutions. These settings are spaces where religious, social, and political meanings intersect. Political awareness may consequently develop through ordinary interactions in which community members exchange experiences, evaluate

leadership, discuss public concerns, and connect political choices with shared moral understandings.

Based on this framework, the study uses externalisation, objectification, and internalisation as analytical concepts to examine the formation of political awareness among Muslimat NU women in Sumurjalak. Externalisation is examined through the ways religious and political meanings are articulated in community interaction; objectification concerns how particular understandings of leadership, political responsibility, and transactional politics become collectively recognized norms; and internalisation refers to how these shared meanings are incorporated into members' personal political judgments and practices. The framework therefore directs attention not merely to whether Muslimat NU women participate in elections, but to the social processes through which they come to understand political participation as meaningful, legitimate, moral, or problematic. Berger and Luckmann's theory is thus employed as an interpretive framework for explaining the social construction of political awareness rather than as a procedural method of data analysis.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before presenting the findings, it is important to understand what "politics" and "political awareness" mean in the context of the Muslimat NU community in Sumurjalak. For its members, 'politics' (*siyasah*) is not only understood as the struggle for formal power or party activities, but more broadly as "common affairs for the good of the people" (*al-maslahah al-'āmmah*). This understanding is rooted in the Islamic concept of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, which means calling for good and preventing evil (Irfan Tamwifi, Eliyyil Akbar 2021). This is reflected in concrete actions such as electing fair leaders, monitoring public policy, and rejecting practices that harm society.

Meanwhile, for them "political awareness" for them is not merely an understanding of the system of government or voting rights. Political awareness is a state of collective consciousness formed through social interaction, in which individuals realize and internalize their moral responsibilities as citizens within the framework of religious values. This awareness has ethical and spiritual dimensions, where every political action, especially in voting, is seen as a mandate (trust) that must be accounted for horizontally to society and vertically to God (Irfan Tamwifi, Eliyyil Akbar 2021). With this contextual definition, the research findings can be presented moreclearly.

1. Internalisation of Religious Values in Political Awareness

The political awareness of Muslimat NU women in Sumurjalak Village is formed through a deep social process and is rooted in the life of their religious community. Activities such as recitation, *tahlilan*, and arisan not only serve as spiritual reinforcement, but also as a means to disseminate political values. Values such as honesty, justice, responsibility and trustworthiness that they learned in the religious context have become integrated into their views on leadership and political choices. In the interview, K (62) emphasized that honesty is the main requirement for a leader. She said, "*A good leader is honest and does not break promises. If you make a promise to the people, you must keep it*." She trusts leaders who are simple, close to the people, and do not like to appear exaggerated in the media. This attitude reflects a rejection of populist leadership styles that prioritize image over integrity. For her, the quality of a leader is determined by his sincerity and siding with the common people.

The same thing was also conveyed by M (48), who emphasized the importance of a warm social relationship between the leader and the people. She said, "*Leaders who are close to the people, willing to talk to them and understand our needs are the most important*." She gained these values

not from formal education, but from her social experiences in the Muslimat community, especially when she attended recitations and arisan. These forums provide a safe place to share experiences, discuss public issues, and assess potential leaders who are truly trustworthy. S (54) also gave a deep reflection, viewing the election of leaders as a spiritual responsibility (Wibisono eta Darmalaksana 2022). She stated, "*If we vote for the wrong person because of money or following the crowd, we will also sin. It is our choice that will be questioned later*." This view shows that her political awareness is not only rational, but also based on strong moral and spiritual principles. For S, political choice is a religious mandate that must be accounted for, not just an expression of political preference (Ishomudin 2019).

This meaning-making process can be explained through the social construction theory proposed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966), which divides the formation of social reality into three stages: externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation. In the context of Muslimat NU in Sumurjalak, religious values are first expressed in recitation forums and community discussions (externalisation), then recognized and repeated together as community standards (objectivation), and finally lived out as life principles by members (internalisation). This process is sustainable and integrated in the dynamics of community life. The value culture that exists in the community does not stand alone. Discussions in *arisan* or *pengajian* forums are also influenced by respected community figures, such as *ustazah*, the head of the Muslimat branch, and other local figures. Ideal leadership values are often associated with figures who demonstrate loyalty to the principles of justice, simplicity and social responsibility, not just formal political achievements (Shofiatul Islamiyah 2019).

Internalising religious values does not happen instantly, but through repeated, structured social mechanisms within community

activities. The main mechanism is through reflective dialogue in religious study groups and social gatherings. For example, when a female religious teacher linked the interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah: 283 about trust with the responsibilities of a regent (externalisation), this sparked discussion among members. This view was then objectified through a consensus that *"a trustworthy leader is one who is honest and close to the people,"* thus becoming a norm in the community (Irfan et al. 2020). Finally, through continuous participation, S internalised this norm into a deep personal conviction that choosing a corrupt leader is a sin because it violates trust. Thus, Berger and Luckmann's theory is evident in action, showing how religious values become political consciousness through concrete social processes.

This meaning-making process can be explained through the social construction theory proposed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966), which divides the formation of social reality into three stages: externalisation, objectification, and internalisation. In the context of Muslimat NU in Sumurjalak, religious values are first expressed in religious study groups and community discussions (externalisation). Subsequently, these values are recognized and repeated together as community standards (objectification), and finally internalised as principles of life by its members (internalisation) (Pramono et al. 2024). This process is continuous and integrated into the dynamics of community life. The culture of values that exists in society does not stand alone. Discussions in social gatherings or religious study groups are also influenced by respected community figures, such as female religious teachers, Muslimat branch leaders, and other local figures. Ideal leadership values are often associated with figures who demonstrate loyalty to the principles of justice, simplicity, and social responsibility, rather than merely formal political achievements (Rouzi et al. 2022).

These values then become a tool for interpreting political information, whether from the media, campaigns or social experiences. Community members not only receive information directly, but judge it based on the moral framework that has been formed through religious experience. Even when a member begins to consider accepting political rewards, other members often remind them by referring to religious values that have become a shared norm. Through this process, the internalisation of religious values not only creates conscious voters, but also a community that is active in exercising value-based social control. In Muslimat forums, this reflective practice occurs naturally and is not forced. Political discussions take place without the domination of certain parties, thus providing a safe space for women to express their views, discuss, and strengthen shared moral beliefs (Halimah Siti Nur 2023).

Thus, the internalisation of religious values within the Muslimat NU community has proven to play an important role in shaping women's political awareness. This process produces voters who are not only politically savvy, but also ethical and spiritually responsible. In the context of local democracy, this bottom-up awareness has great potential to strengthen participation that is dignified, opposed to corruption, and oriented towards collective welfare. The Muslimat community serves as an example that inclusively managed religious spaces can be a place for meaningful and sustainable political education.

2. *Muslim Women's Communities as Agents of Women's Political Socialization*

The Muslimat NU community in Sumurjalak Village functions not only as a religious and social forum but also as an important site of women's political socialisation. In this community, religious activities such as Quran recitation, social gatherings, and *tahlilan* not only strengthen relationships among members but also create informal spaces for

discussing political issues. The three informants in this study consistently stated that Muslimat NU community activities have helped them understand leadership, public policy, and their role as citizens (Fahmi 2024).

M (46) revealed that during social gatherings or religious lectures, conversations often turn to political topics, especially ahead of general elections. She stated that through these conversations, she became more knowledgeable about regional head candidates, their track records, and how other women felt about them. *"Usually, if a social gathering is held before regional elections, there will definitely be people discussing who the good candidates are, who has made promises but not kept them,"* she said. Although these discussions are informal, she learns from them to consider her choices more carefully rather than following or basing her decisions on handouts. M's statement shows that the Muslimat community functions as an informal political education space, which, in Scott's (1990) terms, is part of everyday politics—politics discussed in the context of daily life. Political socialisation does not occur through formal institutions such as political parties or the media, but through collective conversations in domestic-communal spaces (Yates 2022).

The interaction between patriarchy and agency in this context is paradoxical and not black and white. On the one hand, patriarchal culture limits women's formal political participation in Sumurjalak Village, where public spaces are still dominated by men. However, on the other hand, the Muslimat NU community utilizes religious values that are often associated with patriarchal discourse to build their collective agency. The value of *"amar ma'ruf nahi munkar"* (enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil), which is usually applied in the domestic sphere, is reinterpreted and externalized into a moral obligation to criticize bad leaders and choose good ones (Zinira, Udasmoro, eta Azca 2023). Thus, they use religious language and values, which are part of the existing

system of meaning, to break down the boundaries of that system itself. This is not open rebellion, but rather a form of subtle resistance (everyday resistance) that is highly contextual and effective (Arif 2024).

This process provides opportunities for women to understand and express their political views safely and equally, without pressure from formal hierarchies that often limit women's voices in broader public spaces. In addition to being a place for information exchange, the Muslimat community also has a value structure that shapes collective consciousness. As explained by Berger and Luckmann (1966), in the process of objectification, values and meanings that originally originate from individuals will, through repetition in social interactions, become a reality that is accepted collectively. In this context, the perception of an ideal leader, one who is honest, fair, close to the people, and grounded in religious values, is no longer merely a personal view but has become a collective norm within the community (Maula 2016).

Mrs. K (50) shared that before actively joining Muslimat, she rarely followed political developments and tended to be apathetic. However, after frequently attending religious lectures and discussions, she began to pay attention to issues such as government assistance, village programs, and the candidates put forward by political parties. *"From my friends' stories, I know which leaders work well and which ones are just pretending,"* she explained. *K*'s experience demonstrates that her involvement in the community has fostered active political awareness, even without formal education (Fadillah 2023).

Community activities also give members the confidence to express their opinions on politics. S (54) stated that she feels more confident discussing good leadership candidates, especially since the Muslimat forum provides a space to voice opinions without fear of being dismissed. She assessed that this community environment "educates subtly," not

through political theories, but through discussions that are relevant and in line with their daily lives.

Syahputra's study (2020) also supports this finding, showing that NU women's organizations such as Muslimat serve as spaces for political literacy that build women's knowledge and awareness in understanding local politics. This community is not patronizing, but provides a space for shared learning based on values. This is very different from the formal approach, which is often top-down and does not meet the needs and language of mothers at the village level. Local political culture plays an important role in shaping the direction of political discussions within the Muslimat community. Muslimat women's political preferences are often influenced not only by the media or formal campaigns, but also by personally known public figures, such as kiai, religious leaders, or village officials. In this context, the Muslimat community serves as a place to collectively verify political information and consider the moral views held by the community before making a decision. The political consciousness that emerges is not neutral, but contextualized in close socio-cultural experiences and contains local values.

Some members also explained that discussions about regional head candidates involve emotional and ethical considerations, not just rational or programmatic ones. One Muslimat member, M, stated that she tends not to vote for candidates who have a "too luxurious lifestyle," even if the programs offered are good. This shows that the value of simplicity and closeness to the people are important factors in shaping political perceptions, which are formed through dialog within the community. Structurally, the Muslimat community in Sumurjalak village has an active and solid management. The head of the Muslimat branch regularly invites members to participate in activities, including deliberations that not only discuss religious issues, but also socio-political issues in the village. In this organizational structure, the roles of the chairperson, secretary, and field

coordinator are crucial to maintain the continuity of discussions and ensure activities are not only ritualistic, but also reflective. Open leadership encourages active participation from members, especially in expressing opinions on socio-political conditions (Izzah 2018).

The impact of this community-based political socialization is evident in the increased participation of Muslimat women in elections. Several informants stated that they are now more confident to make choices independently, without having to follow the decisions of their husbands or families. In addition, after the election, Muslimat members also continue to discuss the performance of elected officials and sometimes convey their aspirations through recitation forums or meetings with community leaders. This shows that political socialization in this community does not stop at elections, but continues to be a space for ethical and participatory social control.

Thus, it can be concluded that the Muslimat NU community functions as an effective and contextual agent of political socialization for women in Sumurjalak Village. Through casual discussions during religious study sessions and gatherings, its members not only learn about potential leaders and policies but also interpret politics as part of their moral and social responsibilities. This community demonstrates that political education does not have to be formal or academic but can evolve from shared experiences built on trust, equality, and shared values (Longhofer et al. 2016).

3. Ethical and Anti-Transactional Political Awareness

The growing political awareness among Muslimat NU women in Sumurjalak Village reflects a strong rejection of transactional politics. Through interviews and observations, the three informants emphasized that money politics not only undermines democratic values but also degrades voters' dignity. They view the distribution of money or food

parcels by political candidates not as an expression of concern but as a manipulative strategy that erodes political morality and blurs leaders' social responsibility toward the people. Although not expressed in theoretical terms, this perspective shows a values-based political understanding rooted in values. For example, Mrs. K stated that "*a good leader is one who sincerely cares for the people, is honest in their words, and always prioritizes the interests of the people.*" For her, integrity and honesty are far more important than popularity or temporary material gifts. She also adds that her involvement in Muslimat activities greatly influences her views on politics and leadership. Discussions within the community about policies that do not favor the people encourage a critical attitude and an understanding that leaders should be judged based on their moral commitment, not just empty promises (Makhasin 2017).

M also emphasized that honesty is the main foundation of public trust. She argued, *"Without honesty, there is no strong foundation for building a relationship between leaders and the people."* She added that a leader must be sensitive to the suffering of the people and not only appear during campaigns. This perspective shows that her political awareness has undergone a process of internalisation of values, which is the absorption of social values into an individual's way of thinking and acting, as explained by Berger and Luckmann (1966). In the Muslimat community, the rejection of money politics has become a collective understanding (Marwah, Catur Pratiwi, eta Lestari 2018). S emphasized that a good leader is one who is "honest, fair, and trustworthy." She believes that a trustworthy leader would not degrade the people by offering temporary gifts to buy votes. For her, the people's votes are a trust, and choosing the wrong candidate because of material enticements is a violation that will be held accountable before God. This perspective shows that political elections are not only seen as a democratic right but also as a spiritual obligation.

Rejection of money politics is not only moral, but also structural. The Muslimat community developed effective mechanisms of collective resistance through: (1) the establishment of anti-corruption norms with clear standards of behavior and a system of mutual reminders; (2) the construction of alternative meanings in which money is not considered an incentive but rather an insult to dignity; and (3) the strengthening of collective identity as dignified religious women. This form of resistance shows how collective agents reinforce community values to combat corrupt political practices.

Discussions in Muslimat study groups, social gatherings, and regular meetings further reinforce these values. Members remind each other that accepting money in elections is not only pragmatic but can also be seen as involvement in dishonesty and injustice. Within the framework of Berger and Luckmann's theory, these values undergo a process of objectification, where individual perspectives are repeated in a social context and then accepted as collective norms. When the principle of "do not vote for money" is expressed and agreed upon in religious study forums, it becomes a guiding principle and moral standard within the community. Furthermore, the Muslimat community has created a space for moral control over the political life around them. Discussions about political promises, the behavior of prospective leaders, and leadership track records are conducted with a critical spirit and collective awareness. The mothers feel a social and spiritual responsibility to advise and guide one another in making fair and meaningful political choices. Politics is no longer a topic to be avoided, but has become an important part of their discussions as citizens and members of the community (Makhasin 2017).

This strong anti-transactional stance shows that Muslimat NU mothers are not passive voters easily influenced by campaigns or empty promises. Instead, they are active political subjects, with a value framework shaped by collective experience, spirituality, and social

solidarity. They understand that political participation is not just about exercising the right to vote, but also about maintaining the integrity of their choices as a form of responsibility toward society and religion. Thus, politics in the eyes of the Muslimat community is not just about who is elected, but also about how and why someone is elected. Politics is understood as a trust, not a transaction. Votes cannot be bought, because votes are a matter of honor and responsibility. In the context of local democracy, which is often influenced by money politics and elite domination, the existence of the Muslimat NU community in Sumurjalak serves as a concrete example that ethical values and faith can take root in the democratic process at the grassroots level. Through religious study sessions, mutual aid groups, and informal discussions, they demonstrate that moral political participation can emerge from the community, shared experiences, and a living faith (Mahsun, Elizabeth, eta Mufrikhah 2021/a).

4. Analysing the Social Construction of Political Awareness

The results of this study indicate that the political awareness of Muslimat NU women in Sumurjalak Village is formed through socially meaningful experiences that take place in communal religious spaces. In this context, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1966) theory of social construction serves as a powerful analytical tool for understanding how collective experiences within a community gradually and profoundly shape political reality. This theory explains that social reality does not arise spontaneously but is shaped through three processes: externalisation, objectification, and internalisation. These three processes can be clearly observed in the religious and social practices of the Muslimat NU community (Ma'rufah 2023).

This analysis gains deeper insight by understanding the contextual definitions of "politics" and "political awareness" held by the community, as explained in the research results. For them, politics (siyasah) is a

collective affair to achieve the common good (*al-maslahah al-'āmmah*), while political awareness is a moral and spiritual responsibility (Caniago et al. 2024). This understanding becomes a lens that unifies the three social construction processes, so that these processes are not only mechanistic but also meaningful and valuable.

First, the process of externalisation occurs when religious values such as honesty, trustworthiness, and justice are openly expressed in religious gatherings (*pengajian*), *tahlilan*, and *arisan*. In these activities, religious leaders and fellow community members explicitly link Islamic teachings to issues of leadership and social responsibility. These values are not constructed within a formal ideological framework but in everyday language that is close to women's lived experiences (Dewantri et al. 2023). This process transforms spiritual activities into an unrecognized yet highly effective space for political education. This aligns with Halimah's (2023) findings, which state that Muslim women at the grassroots level form political understanding not through formal education but through the internalisation of religious values within the community.

Second, the values that have been socially expressed then undergo objectification, which is when these values are collectively accepted as shared truths and norms. In this study, the perception that leaders must be honest, responsible, and close to the people became the dominant view that was collectively upheld in the Muslimat community. This objectification process is reinforced by the homogeneous nature of the community and its strong social bonds. Shared values serve as a collective "filter" for evaluating political information from outside sources, whether from the media or from candidates' campaigns (Syaefudin eta Wijayanti 2022). When one member stated that money politics is an insult to the dignity of the people, other members affirmed this with similar experiences. This objectification makes the values of honesty and anti-transactional politics not only individual views but also community

ethical standards (Mahsun, Elizabeth, eta Mufrikhah 2021b). The study by Mohamad and Yeby (2020) supports this by emphasizing that religious-based women's organizations act as moral control agents over electoral democracy.

Third, the values that have become community norms are then internalised personally by members. In this study, internalisation was evident when informants stated that choosing a leader is part of a mandate for which they will be held accountable before God. This means that their political orientation is not merely a rational calculation of work programs or campaign promises, but is based on moral values and spiritual responsibility. This internalisation takes place through a long and repetitive process in every religious activity, where these values are not only heard, but also applied in daily discussions and interactions. As a result, a political consciousness has been formed that is integrated with their religious identity. This explains why Muslimat mothers are not easily influenced by populist campaign strategies or money politics (Ulifia 2023). Their political awareness is reflective and normative, rooted in the values and social experiences built within the religious community. In this regard, Berger and Luckmann's approach opens up an understanding that politics, for them, is not a secular space, but a moral space closely related to values of faith. Thus, this study confirms that the political consciousness formed within the Muslimat NU community is the result of a social construction built through an ongoing process in daily interactions. Religious communities serve as spaces where political values are not only taught but also lived out collectively. This consciousness is ethical, reflective, and contextual, demonstrating that spirituality can serve as a strong foundation for the growth of dignified democracy at the local level (Widodo eta Hariyoto 2023).

D. CONCLUSION

This study finds that political awareness among Muslimat NU women in Sumurjalak is socially constructed through everyday interactions within religious and community activities. *Pengajian*, *tahlilan*, *arisan*, and informal discussions provide spaces in which women exchange political information, evaluate leadership, and connect electoral choices with religious values such as honesty, justice, responsibility, and trustworthiness. Through these interactions, political meanings are collectively negotiated and gradually internalised, including expectations of ethical leadership, independent political judgment, and rejection of transactional politics. Muslimat NU therefore functions not merely as a religious organization but also as an informal and gendered space of political learning.

Theoretically, these findings demonstrate how Berger and Luckmann's processes of externalisation, objectification, and internalisation operate in the formation of political awareness within a rural Muslim women's community. Empirically, the study shows that political awareness is not produced only through formal political institutions, campaigns, or media exposure, but also through socially legitimate religious spaces embedded in everyday life. This extends the empirical application of social construction theory by showing how religion, gendered interaction, and community organization intersect in shaping political meanings and practices.

The implication of this study is that women's religious organizations serve as crucial informal spaces for fostering political awareness, strengthening women's political agency, and encouraging democratic participation at the grassroots level. Its findings are limited to one village and a small number of active Muslimat NU members, so they should not be generalized to Muslim women or Muslimat NU more broadly. Future research should compare different Muslim women's

organizations, localities, generations, and levels of organizational involvement to examine how variations in religious authority, gender norms, and political contexts shape the construction of political awareness.

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