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**AUTHORITY TO REGULATE AND UTILIZE WATER RESOURCES  
MANAGEMENT FROM PERSPECTIVE OF ENVIRONMENTAL**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines state authority in water resource management from the perspective of environmental administrative law amid increasing pressures on water quality, climate change, and conflicts of interest among the state, communities, and the private sector in Indonesia. Following the Constitutional Court's decisions and the enactment of Law No. 17 of 2019 concerning Water Resources, the state is reaffirmed as the principal authority responsible for controlling and ensuring water utilization for public welfare. This research employs a normative juridical method using legislative, conceptual, and comparative approaches. Data were collected from primary legal materials, including statutes, implementing regulations, and court decisions, as well as secondary materials such as books, scientific journals, and relevant studies. The analysis uses descriptive-analytical and interpretative techniques to examine norms and principles of environmental administrative law. The findings reveal that the state exercises authority through administrative instruments such as licensing, supervision, and administrative sanctions. However, overlapping authority between central and regional governments, weak environmental oversight, and limited integration between administrative and ecological instruments reduce governance effectiveness. In addition, the principles of participation, transparency, and precaution have not been optimally implemented, affecting environmental protection and community rights to water. The study concludes that strengthening legal instruments, harmonizing authority, enhancing institutional capacity, and consistently applying principles of good governance and precaution are essential for sustainable and equitable water resource management. This article contributes by offering an integrated analysis of post-2019 water governance and its implications for environmental administrative law reform in Indonesia.

## 1. Introduction

Water resource management is crucial because it holds dual status as both public law and a source of life. This importance stems from the fact that water is a basic human need and a crucial element for ecosystem sustainability.<sup>1</sup> The urgency of water management as public law: As public law, water resource management is urgent because it regulates common interests and prevents conflicts in its use. State control: Water is a vital sector of production that affects the livelihoods of many people. Therefore, the state has an obligation to control and manage water for the prosperity of the people, as mandated by the constitution. Preventing excessive privatization: Without strong regulations, water resources can become the target of excessive privatization, threatening public access to clean water. Reducing conflict: Poorly regulated management can lead to conflict between users, between sectors, and between regions. Public law serves to regulate water use fairly and equitably, thereby reducing the potential for disputes.<sup>2</sup> Guaranteeing basic community rights: The state plays a role in ensuring the availability of sufficient clean water for the community's daily basic needs.

Regulation of authority: Public law regulates the duties and authorities of central and regional governments in water resource management, including monitoring water quality and infrastructure maintenance. Bathing and sanitation: Good management ensures the availability of clean, quality water to meet these basic needs, thereby preventing diseases caused by poor water quality. Supporting ecosystem sustainability: Proper management ensures the preservation of environmental functions and carrying capacity. Supporting economic production: Water is a vital resource for various sectors, including agriculture, industry, and energy.<sup>3</sup> Optimal management enables efficient water use to support sustainable economic and social development. Reducing the risk of natural disasters: Effective management also includes efforts to mitigate water-related disasters, such as floods and erosion. By regulating water flow, the risk of damage to property and lives can be minimized. Ensuring future sustainability: Sustainable water management means meeting current needs without compromising the availability of water for future generations. This includes conservation efforts to prevent overexploitation of renewable water resources.<sup>4</sup> Overall, the urgency of water resource management lies in the combination of these two aspects: ensuring fairness and equitable access through a public legal framework, while simultaneously guaranteeing its availability and quality as a vital life source for all living things. The urgency of water management as a life source: As a life source, wise water management is crucial to ensuring the survival of humans and nature.

The conflict of authority between the central and regional governments regarding privatization and environmental sustainability is a complex issue involving competing interests, overlapping regulations, and often detrimental impacts on communities and the environment. The main issue: This conflict typically centers on the management of natural resources (SDA) in the regions. Aspects of Privatization: Central Authority: The central government has the authority to create strategic policies and grant permits for major investments, including the privatization of natural resources, such as water or mining. Economic Impact: The rationale for privatization is often based on the desire to reduce the government's financial burden, increase efficiency, and promote professional management. Risks for Regions: Privatization can trigger conflicts of interest, where private companies seeking profit ignore

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<sup>1</sup> Akbareldi Affan and Candra Kirana Rosita, "Politik Hukum Pengelolaan Sumber Daya Air Dalam Undang-Undang Sumber Daya Air," *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan* 10, no. 22 (2022): 56–63.

<sup>2</sup> Sri Rezky Wulandari Andi and Ilyas Anshori, "Pengelolaan Sumber Daya Air Di Indonesia: Tata Pengurusan Air Dalam Bingkai Otonomi Daerah," *Jurnal Gema Keadilan* 6, no. 3 (2019): 287 – 299.

<sup>3</sup> Weningtyas Annisa and Widuri Endang, "Pengelolaan Sumber Daya Air Berbasis Kearifan Lokal Sebagai Modal Untuk Pembangunan Berkelanjutan," *Volkgeist: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum Dan Konstitusi* 5, no. 1 (2022): 129 – 144.

<sup>4</sup> Kirana K. Chandra, "Pengelolaan Sumber Daya Air Berdasarkan Perspektif Hukum Indonesia," *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Teknologi* 2, no. 11 (2021).

the interests of local communities and neglect their obligations to conserve the environment.<sup>5</sup> Such conflicts often occur in water management, coastal areas, and mining.<sup>6</sup> Aspects of Environmental Sustainability: Regional Authority: Regional governments have the authority to create regional regulations (perda) regarding environmental protection and management within their jurisdictions. Weak regional regulations: Some regional regulations in the field of natural resource management still minimally incorporate sustainable development principles, making it difficult to control environmental damage caused by privatization activities.

Environmental impacts: Massive privatization and exploitation of natural resources can result in severe environmental damage, such as pollution, deforestation, and depletion of natural resources. Points of conflict: Overlapping regulations: The lack of harmony in regulations between the central and regional governments creates legal uncertainty and often harms the public interest. Struggles over economic resources: Regional autonomy can give rise to horizontal and vertical conflicts in competing for natural resources as a source of regional income, especially in border areas.<sup>7</sup> Lack of coordination: Weak coordination between the central and regional governments results in ineffective policy implementation and has the potential to cause problems in the field.<sup>8</sup> Resolutions and solutions: Regulatory harmonization: Clear and firm regulatory harmonization is needed between the central and regional governments, prioritizing the principles of legality and public interest. Strengthening regional institutions: The capacity of regional governments needs to be improved, both in terms of human resources and institutions, so that they can manage natural resources effectively in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. Recognition of customary rights: It is important to recognize and respect the rights of indigenous peoples in the management of natural resources, which are often marginalized due to privatization policies.

Article 33 paragraph 3 of the 1945 Constitution is the legal basis that mandates that the land, water, and natural resources contained therein are controlled by the state and used for the greatest prosperity of the people. Control by the State: "Controlled by the state" means the state has the authority to regulate, manage, and supervise these natural resources. The Goal of "The Greatest Prosperity of the People": This goal mandates that natural resource management be carried out fairly and equitably, not solely for the benefit of certain groups or for the benefit of the state. It also includes the responsibility to preserve nature for future generations.<sup>9</sup> Derivative Legal Basis: Article 33 paragraph 3 serves as the basis for more specific regulations, such as laws in the fields of mining, energy, and other natural resources, as well as their implementing regulations, among others regulated by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. The relevant legal basis for Law No. 17 of 2019 is the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which states that water is an important branch of production that controls the livelihoods of many people and is controlled by the state. In addition, Law No. 17 of 2019 itself was formed as a follow-up to the decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia No. 85/PUU-XI/2013 which affirms water as a basic human need. Main legal basis: The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia: Serves as a philosophical foundation that regulates the management of water resources.

The Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia No. 85/PUU-XI/2013: Serves as the legal basis for the formation of Law No. 17 of 2019 because it affirms water as a basic human need that is bestowed by God Almighty for all Indonesian people. Other relevant legal basis: Law No. 7 of 2004 concerning Water Resources: Law No. 17 of 2019 is a replacement for the previous

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<sup>5</sup> Hidayati Deni, "Memudarnya Nilai Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Dalam Pengelolaan Sumber Daya Air," *Jurnal Kependudukan Indonesia* 11, no. 1 (2016): 39–48.

<sup>6</sup> Ghina Annaifah Salsabila, "Tata Kelola Sumber Daya Air Berkelanjutan-Berkeadilan: Bagaimana Indonesia Memperkuat Poros Maritim?," *Jurnal EcoProfit* 1, no. 2 (2024): 90–106.

<sup>7</sup> Kuslasanti Uni, Pambudi Bagus, and Ratu Sawitri Dian, "Hubungan Antara Kebijakan Lingkungan Dengan Prilaku Pro-Lingkungan: Sebuah Kajian Literatur Sistematis," *Jurnal Litbang* 18, no. 1 (2022): 31 – 46.

<sup>8</sup> Ricko Anas Extrada and K Kamarusdiana, "The Constitutionality of State Authority Over Water Resources Management Based on Human Rights Principles," *STAATSRECHT: Indonesian Constitutional Law Journal* 5, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.15408/siclj.v5i1.20769>.

<sup>9</sup> Dimas Putra Pradhyksa, "Pengaturan Pendayagunaan Sumber Daya Air Dalam Undang-Undang Cipta Kerja Dan Korelasinya Dengan Pasal 33 UUD 1945," *Ascarya: Journal of Islamic Science, Culture, and Social Studies*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.53754/iscs.v1i2.16>.

law, namely Law No. 7 of 2004. Law No. 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government: Regulates the authority and responsibilities of regional governments in managing water resources in their regions, which also serves as the basis for Law No. 17 of 2019. The legal basis relevant to Law No. 32 of 2009 is the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia which states that a good and healthy environment is a human right, Law No. 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation which has amended several provisions in Law No. 32 of 2009, as well as various government and ministerial regulations which further regulate the provisions contained in the law. The main legal basis and which amends the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia: Becomes a constitutional basis because a good and healthy environment is a human right of citizens.<sup>10</sup> Law No. 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation: Amends several important articles in Law No. 32 of 2009. For example, changes to Article 88 concerning absolute responsibility and provisions relating to environmental permits. Derivative regulations Government Regulations (PP): Further regulate environmental quality standards, environmental damage criteria, and environmental economic instruments. Ministerial Regulations: Regulate in more detail environmental quality standards and environmental permits. Other regulations: Law No. 32 of 2009 also regulates various provisions that serve as the legal basis for environmental law enforcement, whether through administrative, civil, or criminal channels. Relationship with the previous law Law No. 23 of 1997 concerning Environmental Management: Law No. 32 of 2009 revokes this law and declares it no longer valid, as a form of legal reform to ensure better legal certainty.

## 2. Method

Normative or doctrinal jurisprudence: Normative or doctrinal jurisprudence is a legal research approach that focuses on legal norms, such as statutes, regulations, and legal doctrine. This approach analyzes positive law by examining legal theories, concepts, and principles and using secondary data from literature studies to discover, assess, and draw legal conclusions relevant to the research issue.<sup>11</sup> Use of literature studies: relies on secondary data such as laws and regulations, books, and court decisions. Objectives: analyze the consistency between norms, describe the application of positive law, and seek solutions to legal problems based on applicable rules.

Reasoning method: tends to use deductive logic to analyze and draw conclusions about legal problems.<sup>12</sup> Differences from other approaches: a) Unlike empirical juridical research, empirical juridical research examines how the law is applied and its impact on societal behavior, while normative juridical research does not directly examine these social aspects. b) Unlike normative-empirical juridical research, this combined approach combines both, analyzing legal norms while simultaneously examining their implementation in the field.

Conceptual and comparative approaches (are two methods in legal research). The conceptual approach focuses on analyzing legal concepts and doctrines to understand their meaning and implications, while the comparative approach compares legal systems (regulations, decisions) between countries or over a specific time period to examine similarities and differences.<sup>13</sup> The conceptual approach helps establish a common understanding of multi-interpretable legal terms, and the comparative approach is used to find solutions to specific legal issues.<sup>14</sup>

a) Conceptual approach, focus: analyzing legal issues through the lens of evolving legal concepts, doctrines, and ideas. Objective: understanding the meaning and implications of specific legal concepts and exploring legal definitions and principles relevant to the issue being researched.

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<sup>10</sup> Nadia Astriani, "Legal Politics of Water Resources Management in Indonesia: Environmental Perspective," *Mimbar Hukum, Universitas Gadjah Mada*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.22146/jmh.28664>.

<sup>11</sup> B. Baxter, *A Theory of Ecological Justice* (London: Routledge., 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Iskandar Iskandar, "Pengaturan Pengelolaan Air Tanah Di Daerah (Ius Constituendum).," *Sustainable Environmental and Optimizing Industry Journal*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.36441/seoi.v2i1.232>.

<sup>13</sup> I. Nursantosa et al., "Analisis Pengelolaan Sumber Daya Air Oleh BUMN, BUMD Dan BUMS Sebagai Bentuk Kerjasama Dalam Meningkatkan Perekonomian Nasional," *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan* 9, no. 12 (2023): 219–230, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8078649>.

<sup>14</sup> M. Q. Oktohandoko, "Pengelolaan Sumberdaya Air Pada Perusahaan Daerah Air Minum (PDAM) Kota Yogyakarta Pasca Putusan Mahkamah Konstitusi Nomor: 85/PUU-XI/2013," *Jurnal Penegakan Hukum Dan Keadilan*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.18196/jphk.1104>.

Example: examining the concept of "prudence" in banking law based on banking legal doctrine, or analyzing the meaning of "good faith" in civil law.

- b) Comparative approach, focus: comparing laws and regulations, legal systems, or court decisions between two or more countries, or across different time periods within a single country. Objective: to identify similarities and differences in legal rules or practices, and to gain new perspectives for resolving legal issues. Example: comparing consumer protection laws in Indonesia with those in Singapore.

Data sources: primary legal materials (laws, implementing regulations) and secondary (journals, books, research results). Analysis techniques: The descriptive-analytical method involves presenting existing data (descriptive) and then analyzing it to draw deeper conclusions.<sup>15</sup> This method is specifically outlined in qualitative research, as explained below.

- a) Analytical descriptive, description: "analytical descriptive" combines two types of writing. 1) Descriptive: Explains what exists or happened, what facts exist in the field, or what data is available. 2) Analytical: goes further to explain the meaning, impact, or relevance of the data, and looks for relationships between variables. 3) Purpose: Provides a clear and systematic description of the data, then analyzes it to draw accurate conclusions. 4) Example: Describing consumer behavior data (such as demographics and the number of new/returning customers) and then analyzing it to understand patterns and trends.
- b) Interpretive, 1) purpose: providing deeper meaning and understanding based on the research subject's perspective and social context. 2) Focus: exploring the subjective meaning behind the data and facts presented. 3) Example: interpreting how a student interprets their own online learning experience within their social and cultural context. c) Relationship Between Three, 1) descriptive-analytical: combining both approaches, describing a phenomenon and then analyzing the relationships between variables within it. 2) Descriptive-interpretive: complementing data analysis with in-depth interpretation, linking the data to broader social meanings. 3) Comprehensive approach: in complex research, these three approaches can be used sequentially or simultaneously to generate a holistic understanding, from a basic overview to deeper meaning.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Authority to Regulate Water Resources Management: Role of Central and Regional Governments

The primary legal basis currently is Law Number 17 of 2019 concerning Water Resources (UU SDA). This law also allows for the involvement of village governments and communities in natural resource management, as part of decentralization and community participation efforts.<sup>17</sup> The basic principles of natural resource management, according to the regulation, include conservation, utilization, control of water's destructive power, community empowerment, and data and information transparency. From a constitutional and human rights perspective, the state is obliged to guarantee the people's right to water as a basic right. Implication: Water management and regulation cannot be left solely to the private sector without state oversight the state is obligated to ensure water availability for the people's well-being and environmental sustainability.

The central government, through the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (PUPR) particularly the Directorate General of Water Resources is actively building and maintaining water infrastructure: dams, reservoirs, irrigation, raw water networks, and others. In 2023, there were 223 dams, 3,464 reservoirs, and 114 lakes in Indonesia. For example, in the 2023 dry season, the main dam

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<sup>15</sup> E. Erwinsyah, A. Gunarsa, and A. Mappanyukki, "Kinerja BUMD Air Minum: Studi Komprehensif Atas Kebijakan Tarif, Motivasi Finansial, Tingkat Kehilangan Air, Dan Jumlah Pelanggan," *Tangible Journal* 10, no. 1 (2025): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.53654/tangible.v10i1.618>.

<sup>16</sup> A. D. P. Irfhamna, "Kelembagaan Sumber Daya Air Untuk Swasembada Pangan," 2024.

<sup>17</sup> J. I. Manik and M. I. I. Rambe, "Implementasi Prinsip-Prinsip Hukum Lingkungan Dalam Pengelolaan Sumber Daya Alam Di Indonesia," *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.31004/innovative.v4i4.14099>.

was able to supply 3.73 billion m<sup>3</sup> of its effective capacity of 5.52 billion m<sup>3</sup> representing drought mitigation efforts and ensuring water availability for communities and agriculture. However, a major challenge remains: equitable access to clean water: according to 2023 public data, access to improved drinking water in Indonesia reached approximately 91.72%.<sup>18</sup> On the piped water supply side (drinking water through piped networks), coverage is relatively small many households still rely on wells or other water sources. Implication: The central government's role in infrastructure development is crucial, but to ensure equitable access to natural resources, local governments need support both through regulations, funding, technical capacity, and coordination mechanisms.

Several studies have stated that private water management especially exclusive or commercial contradicts the spirit of the constitution and the human right to water, as the state is supposed to maintain control over water for the welfare of the people. Following the revocation of several previous regulations (for example, some provisions deemed to grant extensive water use rights to the private sector), new regulations attempt to restore the state's role as the primary controller of natural resources. However, implementation at the regional level is sometimes hampered: regional regulations can overlap, technical/financial capacity is limited, and coordination between agencies is suboptimal which risks inequality in water access and quality. Implication: It is crucial to maintain the management of natural resources under state and public control (not solely commercial), and to strengthen regulation and oversight including at the regional level.

**Table 1.** Clean Water Access and Infrastructure Capacity in Indonesia (2019–2023) (Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023)

No	Indicators	Figures / Facts	Brief Explanation
1.	National access to safe drinking water (2023)	91.72% of households.	Shows significant progress in providing basic water services, but not yet 100%.
2.	Coverage of piped services (drinking water through piped networks)	Relatively low many households still rely on wells/non-piped water.	Indicates service disparities between urban/city areas and rural/remote areas.
3.	Dam/reservoir/lake/irrigation/raw water infrastructure (2023)	223 dams, 3,464 reservoirs, 114 lakes; significant total storage capacity.	Demonstrates significant efforts by the central government through the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (PUPR) to ensure water security and irrigation.
4.	Surface water utilization	The average annual surface water in Indonesia reaches 2.78 trillion m <sup>3</sup> /year.	The potential is enormous but distribution and management must be efficient to ensure availability for all.

Data shows that despite Indonesia's vast water resource potential and extensive infrastructure development, the biggest challenge remains equitable access particularly to piped water and distribution services across all regions. The gap between potential and realized services indicates the need to strengthen regulations, regional capacity, and governance coordination.<sup>19</sup> The constitution and national regulations emphasize that water and water resources are under state control, with shared responsibility between the central and regional governments in accordance with the 2019 Water Resources Law. Water privatization carries the risk of violating people's rights and conflicts with the principle of state

<sup>18</sup> L. Farihah and F. Angraini, "Prinsip Kehati Hatian Dan Kerugian Potensial Dalam Perkara Tata Usaha Negara Terkait Lingkungan Hidup," *Jurnal Yudisial*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.29123/jy.v5i3.123>.

<sup>19</sup> J. Rusydi, J. Januri, and R. Santina, "Tanggungjawab Pemerintah Dalam Penegakan Hukum Lingkungan Hidup Di Indonesia," *Audi et AP: Jurnal Penelitian Hukum*, 2023.

control over water; current regulations and legal studies emphasize that water resources management must remain under public control and oriented toward the welfare of the people.

### **3.2 Inter-institutional Relationships: Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (PUPR), Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), Regional Governments, and State-Owned Enterprises/Regional-Owned Enterprises**

With the issuance of Government Regulation Number 30 of 2024 (PP 30/2024) concerning Water Resources Management, it is stipulated that natural resource management must be carried out comprehensively, integratedly, and with an environmental perspective. According to the PP and implementing regulations, natural resource management can be carried out by the Central Government, Regional Governments (provinces, regencies/cities), or State-Owned Enterprises/Regional-Owned Enterprises, depending on their respective authority. The licensing and approval procedures for natural resource use are regulated in Ministerial Regulation Number 2 of 2024 (Permen PUPR 2/2024) where the Minister, Governor, or Regent/Mayor are authorized to issue permits/approvals.

The Ministry of Environment and Forestry's (KLHK) role is generally related to environmental aspects such as conservation, water pollution control, and ecosystem protection. However, in institutional practice, fragmentation of authority often occurs between infrastructure management and water allocation (PUPR/Pemda/BUMN/BUMD) and environmental aspects (KLHK). This requires cross-agency coordination to balance conservation and utilization goals. With the above regulations, BUMN/BUMD (for example, the regional drinking water company PDAM) is mandated to provide drinking water services to the public. In this case, BUMN/BUMD are "extensions" of the state/region in the provision and distribution of clean water, under the control of government laws and regulations. Implications: A clear division of regulatory authority between PUPR, KLHK, Pemda, and BUMN/BUMD is essential to ensure the proper differentiation and management of water conservation, allocation, and service tasks.<sup>20</sup>

BUMD Drinking Water, as part of the BUMD/BUMN, plays a strategic role in translating natural resource management policies into concrete services: providing drinking water to communities in cities/regencies. A study of PDAM Tirtamarta Yogyakarta shows that following the 2013 Constitutional Court ruling, PDAM continues to perform its functions in accordance with regional and national regulations as a water resource manager for drinking water. According to the evaluation report (BUMD Drinking Water Performance Book 2024) released by the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (PUPR), several BUMD Drinking Water received performance assessments covering financial, service, operational, and human resource aspects.

However, various real-world problems remain: many BUMDs face challenges with tariffs, water loss (non-revenue water), operational efficiency, and uneven service coverage which impact public water access.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the legal and policy review states that when the private sector/Private-Owned Enterprises (BUMS) are involved, they must ensure that the public interest and the people's right to water are prioritized given that water is a public resource. Implications: BUMN/BUMD play a key role as implementers of water services but their performance is highly dependent on regulations, tariffs, management, and operational capacity. To ensure equitable and sustainable access, policy, regulatory, and resource support are needed for BUMDs to operate effectively.

As criticized in the policy opinion, water management in Indonesia is currently "spread across many institutions," making the effectiveness and efficiency of natural resource management a dilemma. Although there are coordinating institutions such as the National Water Resources Council (DSDAN) established under Presidential Regulation Number 53 of 2022 this institution is non-structural and only acts as a coordinator, without an independent budget or full authority. This limits the DSDAN's role in enforcing comprehensive water management.

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<sup>20</sup> A. Julianti, A. Frinaldi, and R. Roberia, "Prinsip-Prinsip Hukum Administrasi Negara Dalam Pengelolaan Sumber Daya Alam (Air Bersih)," 2022.

<sup>21</sup> A. B. Prastyo, R. A. Saputra, and D. Dauri, "Model Perlindungan Dan Pengelolaan Lingkungan Hidup Dalam Mewujudkan Good Governance," 2023.

The combination of fragmentation between the following sectors: infrastructure (PUPR), environment (KLHK), public services (Pemda/BUMD), regulations & permits (PUPR/Pemda), and conservation sometimes operating separately without effective integration mechanisms risks duplication, conflict, or neglect of certain aspects (e.g., conservation or public access). Other challenges include inconsistent data & information on natural resources, differences in regional institutional capacity, and disparities in the capabilities of BUMDs which result in uneven water provision, conservation, and utilization of natural resources.<sup>22</sup> Implications: Without institutional reform and effective coordination mechanisms, the role of multiple institutions can become a burden not a solution. These risks include uneven service delivery, conflicts of authority, and even environmental degradation or water crises in some regions.

PP 30/2024 represents the latest regulation updating the way natural resources are managed in Indonesia replacing previous PPs. This regulation emphasizes that natural resource management must be carried out in an integrated and environmentally sound manner, allowing for the involvement of the central and regional governments, as well as state-owned enterprises (BUMN) and regional-owned enterprises (BUMD) within their respective jurisdictions. However, in policy and institutional practice, there is criticism that the current institutional structure is inadequate for example, the DSDAN, as a non-structural coordinating agency, is insufficient to address the complexities of national water management (conservation, services, irrigation, distribution, sanitation, the environment, climate adaptation, etc.).

In terms of drinking water services, state-owned enterprises (BUMN) and regional-owned enterprises (BUMD) (including PDAM) remain a crucial component but for their role to be effective, they require regular support from the central and regional governments, data transparency, performance audits, and regulatory incentives to ensure clean water services reach all communities equitably. The 2025 study demonstrated variability in BUMD performance based on tariffs, operational efficiency, and water loss. Implications: The future of natural resource management in Indonesia depends heavily on how policies, regulations, and institutional structures are adapted to address complexities from conservation to distribution in the context of demographic pressures, urbanization, climate change, and public service needs.

**Table 2.** Performance of Regionally-Owned Water Companies and Service Access in Indonesia (Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024)

No	Indicators/Aspects	Findings/Data	Brief Explanation
1.	Performance Assessment of Regionally Owned Water Companies (2024)	Available in the 2024 Regionally Owned Enterprises (BUMD) Drinking Water Performance Book published by the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (PUPR).	This book is a national evaluation of the performance of regionally owned enterprises (BUMD) in financial, operational, service, and human resource aspects critical indicators for measuring the effectiveness of drinking water provision.
2.	Health/Status of Regionally Owned Water Companies (healthy/unhealthy/sick)	Of the 389 BUMDs evaluated, most were categorized as "healthy," while the remainder were "less healthy" or "sick."	It shows that although many BUMDs operate well, some require special attention for example, regarding water loss, tariffs, or operational efficiency.
3.	Factors Affecting Regionally Owned Water Companies' Performance	Quantitative studies show that tariff policies, financial motivation, water loss	This illustrates that management and financial aspects beyond just policy or

<sup>22</sup> A. S. Pambudi and T. Kusumanto, "Water Resources Governance in Indonesia Towards Environmental Sustainability Along with Social and Economic Development," *In: Environmental Governance in Indonesia*, 2023, 289–311, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15904-6\\_16](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15904-6_16).

		levels, and customer numbers significantly influence BUMD performance.	regulation are crucial in determining whether BUMDs can provide adequate water services.
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The data shows that the existence and role of regionally-owned enterprises (BUMD) as providers of drinking water services is important, but their performance varies widely. This underscores the need for supporting regulations, sound management, and oversight mechanisms to achieve the goal of equitable and sustainable water access.<sup>23</sup> The relationship between the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (PUPR), the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), regional governments, and state-owned enterprises (BUMN/BUMD) in managing natural resources in Indonesia is built through a fairly comprehensive regulatory framework (PP 30/2024, Permen PUPR 2/2024), enabling multi-stakeholder roles: infrastructure, conservation, public services, and drinking water providers. However, in practice, institutional fragmentation and overlapping roles pose serious challenges: inter-agency coordination is suboptimal, natural resource data and information are not yet integrated, and the capacities of regions and BUMDs vary. BUMN/BUMD (including PDAM) as providers of drinking water services play a crucial role but their performance is inconsistent across regions: many BUMDs are healthy, while others struggle with efficiency, tariffs, water loss, and service coverage. To address today's challenges (rapid urbanization, climate change, increasing water demand for agriculture and industry, and access to clean water), institutional reforms are needed that enable holistic integration, coordination, planning, and implementation.

### **3.3 Principles of Environmental Administration Law in Water Management: Implementation of environmental permits, AMDAL, and monitoring**

Environmental permitting regulations in Indonesia are cumulative: every business or activity estimated to have a significant impact on the environment is required to obtain an environmental permit usually through an AMDAL document (or UKL-UPL if the impact is less significant). Following regulatory revisions through Government Regulation No. 22 of 2021 (PP 22/2021) as an implementation of the environmental cluster in the omnibus law, environmental approval (environmental permit) has again become a basic prerequisite for business licensing as a condition for operating a business or activity.

The AMDAL document (containing KA-ANDAL, ANDAL, RKL, RPL) which includes an environmental impact analysis, management plan, and environmental monitoring remains considered a crucial instrument in determining the feasibility of a project.<sup>24</sup> For example, a SPAM + dam project is included in the AMDAL. Implications: The environmental permit system and AMDAL provide the legal and technical foundation to ensure that infrastructure development or water management activities do not damage the environment and that decisions are made based on comprehensive scientific considerations and environmental impacts, not solely economic aspects.

According to data from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), since 2023, Indonesia has accelerated the environmental approval process KLHK targets completing 3,000 AMDAL/environmental approval documents per year. However, despite the progress of digitalization/simplification, there is criticism that the post-omnibus regulation (PP 22/2021, the implementing regulation) allows for flexibility, potentially leading to business permits being issued without adequate environmental assessments (e.g., through SPPL instead of AMDAL for "small-medium" scale projects), which risks ignoring environmental impacts.

Cases in protected areas and large projects demonstrate that if environmental permits/AMDAL are not processed or ignored e.g., automatic permits, SPPL projects can proceed without adequate impact mitigation. Implications: Although environmental permit and AMDAL mechanisms continue to

<sup>23</sup> I. Renaldi and A. Frinaldi, "Implementation of Batang Arau Watershed Management with Good Environmental Governance Perspective," *Jurnal Bina Praja* 14, no. 2 (2022): 225–237, <https://doi.org/10.21787/jbp.14.2022.225-237>.

<sup>24</sup> A. T. Khithobi, S. Asmorowati, and N. J. Hariani, "WHY IS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE ESSENTIAL? (A Systematic Literature Study)," *Jurnal Kebijakan Pemerintahan* 7, no. 2 (2024): 14–24, <https://doi.org/10.33701/jkp.v7i2.4455>.

be updated and streamlined through digitalization, field practices demonstrate tensions between the desire to accelerate development/permitting and the need for environmental protection and therefore, implementation must be monitored, particularly for water and natural resource projects.<sup>25</sup>

To strengthen the effectiveness of environmental management, the government recently tightened sanctions and supervision through Ministerial Regulation No. 14 of 2024 which allows for the imposition of administrative fines for environmental violations before criminal sanctions, as part of environmental law enforcement efforts. Environmental monitoring data from the Directorate General of Environmental Management and Management of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) shows regular efforts to monitor marine and coastal water quality (e.g., the Marine Water Quality Index, IKAL) as part of efforts to control the impacts of human activities and pollution. While this relates more to marine/coastal water, it is relevant as part of water quality monitoring in downstream rivers/watersheds.<sup>26</sup>

Obstacles arose when business permits were simplified through the Online Single Submission (OSS) system and environmental approvals were replaced by SPPL (Environmental Impact Assessment) systems. Some critics argue that this could weaken in-depth environmental impact assessments, increasing the potential for violations. Implications: Oversight and law enforcement mechanisms need to be strengthened in terms of regulation, capacity, transparency, and public participation so that environmental permits and AMDALs do not merely function on paper, but are able to prevent damage and ensure sustainability.

As part of water management regulations, groundwater use permits are now regulated by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM). The latest data shows that since the new regulations (2024), 4,700 groundwater exploitation permits have been issued across Indonesia by mid-2025. From an environmental perspective, this presents challenges: potential overexploitation of groundwater, groundwater level decline, and impacts on the environment and communities making it crucial that groundwater exploitation permits are accompanied by environmental impact assessments (AMDAL/UKL-UPL), as well as strict monitoring of water quality and quantity. Furthermore, the industrial sector and its demand for water for production also place significant pressure on natural resources.

This demonstrates that environmental regulations and permits (AMDAL, groundwater use permits), water management, and natural resource management must be implemented simultaneously to ensure that water development and utilization do not compromise environmental sustainability and the rights of current and future generations. Implication: Amidst the pressures of groundwater demand and industrial/development needs, the implementation of environmental permits and AMDAL and their oversight is more crucial than ever. Without them, water exploitation could lead to environmental damage, ecological degradation, and future water crises.

**Table 3.** Indicators related to environmental/water management relevant to the implementation of environmental permits & AMDAL in Indonesia (KLHK, 2023)

No	Indicators/Context	Latest Data/Facts	Relevance to Environmental Permits & AMDAL
1.	Environmental approval application at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (2022–2023)	Applications increased sharply: from 356 (2021) to 1,399 (2022) to 1,607 (as of November 2023).	Indicates that many projects including those in the water and infrastructure sectors require environmental permits, necessitating AMDAL/UKL-UPL processes and oversight.

<sup>25</sup> S. G. Annaifah, “Tata Kelola Sumber Daya Air Berkelanjutan-Beredikanaan: Bagaimana Indonesia Memperkuat Poros Maritim?,” *EcoProfit: Sustainable and Environment Business* 1, no. 2 (2024): 90–106, <https://doi.org/10.61511/ecoprofit.v1i2.2024.328>.

<sup>26</sup> S. R. Devie et al., “Transparansi Dalam Tata Kelola Perusahaan Air Minum Di Kabupaten Minahasa,” *Academy of Education Journal* 15, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.47200/aoej.v15i1.2233>.

2.	Expedited AMDAL document completion target for 2024	The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) targets 3,000 AMDAL/environmental approval documents per year.	Demonstrates commitment to regularizing environmental permits but also challenges with administrative capacity and impact assessment.
3.	Groundwater exploitation permit (2024–2025)	Approximately 4,700 groundwater permits have been issued (November 2024–October 2025).	Highlights pressures on natural resources emphasizing the importance of rigorous environmental assessments and permits (“water governance”).
4.	Sea and coastal water quality monitoring (2023)	National Sea Water Quality Index (IKAL) 2023: 78.84 points; monitoring at 563 monitoring points in 36 provinces.	Reflects that environmental and water quality monitoring is in place relevant for upstream-downstream water management and conservation.

The data shows high dynamics in permit requests, groundwater permits, and environmental/water quality monitoring efforts. This illustrates that environmental regulations and practices remain key elements in natural resource management and development projects especially water projects. However, the large volume of permits and pressure on natural resources indicate risks if permits and environmental impact assessments (AMDAL) are not strictly implemented.<sup>27</sup> Environmental regulations in Indonesia have undergone updates to align with investment and governance needs including through Government Regulation 22/2021, process digitization (AmdalNet), and accelerated approvals but this also brings challenges: potential weakening of environmental assessments (through SPPL, automated permits), and pressure on natural resources. The demand for groundwater use permits and the number of infrastructure projects demonstrate that water management must take environmental aspects seriously otherwise, exploitation can lead to water resource degradation and long-term ecological impacts.

### 3.4 Case study: Regional Water Management Permit Conflicts (West Java, Kalimantan, NTT)

Regulatory, water resource projects or utilization such as irrigation, water extraction for industry, dams, or water allocation for communities/farmers should ideally consider permits, environmental impact analyses, and environmental administration procedures. This principle is part of environmental law and environmental administration. However, reality shows that regulation and permit issuance do not always prevent conflicts. For example, in the study of Conflicts in the Utilization of Water Resources for Irrigation in Minggir District, Sleman Regency despite being regulated (the 2006 Irrigation Government Regulation) a conflict of interest arose due to the diversification of water use (irrigation converted to fish ponds), so that the water source was no longer solely for agriculture as originally intended.

This conflict demonstrates that permits or legal status (e.g., "water use rights for irrigation") alone are insufficient without consistent monitoring and enforcement of regulations, changes in use can harm other groups (farmers, communities), especially when water demand increases and supplies are limited.<sup>28</sup> Conversely, formal regulations and documentation are sometimes absent or inadequate making water access, distribution, and control vulnerable to conflict. This highlights the gap between the legal/permit framework and the social, economic, and environmental realities on the ground. Implications: The permit and AMDAL systems while designed to prevent conflict must be accompanied

<sup>27</sup> S. L. Harjanta and D. P. Ningrum, “Inhibiting Factors for Collaborative Water Governance: A Case Study of Mount Merapi Ecosystem in Yogyakarta, Indonesia,” *CHANNEL: Jurnal Komunikasi* 11, no. 1 (2025): 225, <https://doi.org/10.12928/channel.v11i1.225>.

<sup>28</sup> J. Jundiani et al., “Urban Green Space Regulation: Challenges to Water Resources Conservation in Indonesia and Australia,” *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System* 4, no. 1 (2024): 128, <https://doi.org/10.53955/jhcls.v4i1.128>.

by monitoring, use control, and flexibility (periodic evaluation) to ensure the regulatory function remains relevant to the dynamics of water use in the community.

These conflicts don't always take the form of physical clashes they often manifest in inequitable access: local communities or farmers lose access to water, and water quantity and quality decline because a significant portion of it is diverted for industrial/private use. A recent study in the Citarum Watershed area of West Java, for example, in the article "Spatial-Temporal Changes in Water Supply and Demand in the Citarum Watershed, West Java, Indonesia Using a Geospatial Approach," shows that spatial-temporal changes in water supply and demand indicate pressure on water availability due to population growth, urbanization, and water use by various sectors which can trigger water distribution conflicts if regulations and allocations are unfair.<sup>29</sup> These conflicts over water use by the private sector or non-agricultural sectors are usually exacerbated by weak public access to environmental information and permits thus lacking adequate bargaining power and making it difficult for communities to demand justice. Implications: Permit and environmental regulations must consider aspects of access equity especially for local communities, farmers, and indigenous communities and not simply pursue efficiency or economic profit. Transparency of permits, allocations, and hydrological data is crucial.

One important study is "Water and Conflict: A Case Study of South Central Timor Regency" a region in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province. The research shows that although technically the water supply and per capita demand may be sufficient, water accessibility and distribution are highly unequal, resulting in many villages experiencing drought and water shortages. This demonstrates that conflicts over water do not always result in violence or formal disputes they can also take the form of structural injustice, marginalization, and disparities in services. However, the lack of visible conflict does not necessarily mean conditions are just or sustainable.

This phenomenon indicates that formal regulations and permits need to consider the local socio-cultural context, as well as accessibility and distribution, not just the quantity of water resources.<sup>30</sup> Implications: Natural resource management and water permits must take into account geographic aspects, distribution, and access especially in areas with challenging natural conditions (low rainfall, difficult topography) and regulation alone is insufficient without supporting services and distribution.

Based on the results of various water conflict studies, permitting regulations/EIAs must be accompanied by equitable water distribution and allocation policies and consider aspects of ecological sustainability and social justice. This aspect is crucial in addressing the increasingly complex dynamics of water needs (irrigation, industry, drinking water, conservation, ecosystems).<sup>31</sup> Local public and community participation, as well as data transparency (permit status, water quantity and quality, allocation, watershed maps) are crucial to avoid unequal access and conflict and to safeguard communities' right to water.

Conflict resolution mechanisms must be clear: legal regulations, mediation procedures, arbitration, and environmental monitoring to ensure conflicts are resolved fairly and sustainably, without victimizing vulnerable groups. Regular evaluation and adaptation of regulations are necessary: for example, when land use changes or the conversion of irrigation to other uses occur, permit reviews, new impact analyses, and revisions to water allocations must be carried out.

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<sup>29</sup> I. W. Rideng, I. K. K. A. Wijaya, and H. Saripan, "Dimensions of Water Resources Regulation in Philosophy of Justice and Human Rights Perspective," *Journal of Indonesian Legal Studies* 7, no. 1 (2022): 31–56, <https://doi.org/10.15294/jils.v7i1.53820>.

<sup>30</sup> I. B. Cahaya and F. A. Y. Ramadhan, "Problematik Pengaturan Sumber Daya Air Dan Pemenuhan Hak Atas Air Bagi Masyarakat," *Simbur Cahaya: Journal of Water Law & Policy* 30, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.28946/sc.v30i2.2744>.

<sup>31</sup> I. Nafiana, J. Parlindungan, and I. N. S. Wijaya, "Faktor Dan Tingkat Partisipasi Dalam Pengelolaan Air Bersih," *Jurnal Tata Kota Dan Daerah* 16, no. 1 (2024): 93–100, <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.takoda.2024.016.01.9>.

**Table 4.** Findings of Water Conflicts/Access in the Regions and Relevance to Permits/Regulations in Indonesia (PUPR Indonesia, 2025)

No	Area/Case	Types of Conflicts/Issues	Key Factors	Relevance of Permits/Environmental Administration
1.	Minggir District, Sleman (Yogyakarta)	Irrigation water use conflicts vs fishponds	Diversification of water use, lack of regulation/supervision	Shows that permits/water use rights require regular evaluation to prevent misuse.
2.	Cikeruh Sub-watershed (in the Citarum Watershed, West Java)	Water deficits/supply-demand pressures	Increased domestic and industrial water demand, changes in land use	Stresses the importance of watershed management and water allocation based on environmental analysis and official permits.
3.	South Central Timor Regency (TTS), East Nusa Tenggara	Drought, limited access to clean water in some villages	Uneven water distribution, geographic and climatic conditions, limited-service facilities	Shows that permits or regulations alone are not enough they require infrastructure, equitable distribution, and access management.
4.	Citarum Watershed, West Java (supply-demand mapping)	Potential conflicts over urban-industrial water allocation vs agriculture & communities	Urbanization, industrialization, population growth	Supports the need for integrated watershed planning and regulations that are responsive to dynamics.
5.	Communities' vs corporations/entrepreneurs (several districts)	Community access to water is excluded when water is diverted to private companies	Legalization of water for private use without controlling public access	Supports the importance of permit transparency, community involvement, and accountability mechanisms in granting permits/water use.

Conflicts over water management in Indonesia arise not only from limited resources, but also often from weak, unresponsive environmental regulations, permits, and administration, or the absence of oversight and equitable distribution. Cases in areas such as Sleman, Citarum, and TTS demonstrate that without equitable and transparent management, water use risks conflict, inequality, and degradation. However, local wisdom and social solidarity can prevent conflict although they are not structural solutions. Therefore, the principles of environmental administration law (transparency, participation, accountability, and prudence) must be implemented effectively from permitting and allocation to distribution and oversight to ensure that water, as a vital resource, remains available, equitable, and sustainable.

### 3.5 Challenges and Improvement Efforts: Need for Governance Reform based on Good Environmental Governance

The context of pressure on natural resources in Indonesia is significant: urbanization, population growth, climate change, increasing water demand for domestic, industrial, and irrigation purposes while ecosystems and natural capacity are limited. This makes traditional water governance (based on sectors, projects, and infrastructure alone) no longer sufficient. Good Environmental Governance offers a more holistic and sustainability-oriented governance framework: involving legal aspects (the rule of law),

transparency, public participation, accountability, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and integration between environmental, social, and economic aspects.

If not adopted seriously many natural resource/water regulations can overlap, institutional coordination is weak, and economic priorities can override conservation risks environmental degradation, unequal access to water, and future uncertainty. Implications: GEG-based governance reform is not merely a normative idealism but rather a pragmatic necessity to ensure that water as a natural resource remains available, equitable, and sustainable amidst environmental pressures and human use.<sup>32</sup>

Here's how these elements are relevant to water management: Clear Rule of Law and Regulation: The government needs to establish consistent, coherent, and non-overlapping regulations for water management including environmental regulations, spatial planning, watershed management, and groundwater/surface water utilization to ensure clear authority and responsibility. Public and Multi-Stakeholder Participation: Involve the public, local communities, the private sector, and government in water management planning and decision-making to account for local needs, equity of access, and local wisdom.<sup>33</sup>

Transparency & Access to Information: Information regarding regulations, permits, water allocation, water quality and quantity, and watershed management plans must be transparent so the public can monitor and provide input. Accountability & Oversight: Water management institutions must be accountable for decisions, implementation, and environmental and social impacts, with mechanisms for control, audits, and sanctions in place for violations. Collaboration & Integration Across Sectors and Scales: Water management must involve various sectors (environment, spatial planning, agriculture, public services, drinking water) and across regions (downstream–upstream, various watersheds), as well as involving the central government, regional governments, communities, and the private sector. Implications: By implementing the elements of GEG, water governance can be more responsive to human and ecosystem needs, and flexible to social pressures, climate change, and changing patterns of natural resource use.

Several efforts and empirical studies have demonstrated that the application of GEG in water management is feasible and yields positive results although still limited: A concrete example: river basin/watershed management with a GEG perspective in the Batang Arau Watershed demonstrates that collaborative management, community participation, and institutional coordination can help maintain water and environmental sustainability.

A systematic literature review suggests that GEG implementation can help mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, and pressure on natural resource use, provided there is institutional commitment, transparency, and public participation.<sup>34</sup> Regulatory and policy reform efforts for natural resources and water when accompanied by operational and oversight mechanisms have the potential to bridge the gap between regulation and practice, ensuring equitable and sustainable access. Implications: There is practical and conceptual evidence that GEG is not merely an ideal theory it can be applied in Indonesia to water management and can result in more equitable, effective, and sustainable management.

Based on the above analysis and recent literature, here are concrete recommendations to strengthen water governance reform in Indonesia through the principles of Good Environmental Governance: Regulatory Harmonization & Institutional Simplification: Evaluate and simplify regulations related to water, the environment, spatial planning, and irrigation, so that there is a clear, single, integrated regulation facilitating implementation and avoiding overlap. Data Transparency and Public Participation: Publish water quantity and quality data, allocations, permits, and management

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<sup>32</sup> T. Afriadi and H. Wahyono, "Partisipasi Masyarakat Dalam Penyediaan Air Minum Dan Sanitasi Berbasis Masyarakat (PAMSIMAS)-Studi Di Kecamatan Simpur, Hulu Sungai Selatan," *Jurnal Pembangunan Wilayah Dan Kota*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.14710/pwk.v8i4.6489>.

<sup>33</sup> Susilawati Sri, "Analisis Partisipasi Masyarakat Dalam Penyediaan Air Minum Dan Sanitasi Berbasis Masyarakat," *Public Health Journal (PHJ)* 13, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.51888/phj.v13i1.97>.

<sup>34</sup> A. Syapriallah, "Lingkungan Hidup Melalui Partisipasi Masyarakat Terhadap Pengendalian Pencemaran Air (Sungai)," *KNAPHTN–HAN*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.55292/xz68be69>.

plans; facilitate community forums so that citizens can participate, monitor, and provide input. Capacity & Resource Enhancement: Invest in human resources, regional institutions, funding mechanisms, training, information systems, and monitoring and evaluation to ensure consistent GEG practices.

**Latest Data & Indicators** Relevance of GEG to the Reality of Water Management: A recent national study found that despite Indonesia's vast water resource potential, management practices are often hampered by ambiguous regulations, weak coordination, and weak implementation leading to less-than-ideal access and sustainability. According to the 2024-2025 study report, despite regulatory efforts and infrastructure investment, approximately 15% of Indonesia's population still lacks reliable access to clean water representing inequitable access, particularly in areas with weak governance.

This data confirms that without GEG-based governance reforms with clear regulations, coordination, transparency, and participation the potential of natural resources will not automatically translate into equitable access and sustainable services for all. Barriers such as overlapping regulations, sectoral institutions, weak capacity, and unequal access can be overcome if there is a commitment to transparency, participation, accountability, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. There is already evidence and early practice that GEG can be implemented in water management (e.g., watershed management, regulatory improvements) so governance transformation is not impossible, but rather possible and urgent.<sup>35</sup> For the future, reform must be implemented systematically: from regulations, institutions, funding, to public participation to ensure water remains a basic right for all citizens and natural resources are preserved.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study found that state authority in the regulation and utilization of water resources still faces overlapping regulations and disharmony between levels of government. Administrative instruments such as permits, supervision, and sanctions have not been consistently implemented to ensure compliance with the principles of good governance. The findings also indicate that the precautionary principle and environmental protection have not fully influenced the administrative decision-making process related to water utilization. Weak coordination between agencies has resulted in suboptimal implementation of water management within the context of ecological sustainability. Based on these findings, the study concludes that the regulation and utilization of water resources must be based on the principles of ecological justice and state responsibility.

The state is obliged to ensure that water utilization is not solely economically oriented but also guarantees the sustainability of ecosystems and community rights. Harmonization of central and regional authorities is necessary to ensure that administrative instruments can operate effectively and avoid conflicts of authority. This study emphasizes the need to strengthen the role of administrative oversight as a primary instrument for environmental protection. The novelty of this article lies in the integration of an analysis of state administrative authority with the principle of ecological justice as a basis for evaluating water policy. Furthermore, this study offers a new conceptual framework for assessing the effectiveness of water management through a more sustainable and equitable approach to environmental administrative law.

Based on findings regarding overlapping authority and weak implementation of administrative instruments, strengthening regional government authority in regulating and utilizing water resources is necessary. To close gaps identified in this study, policy synchronization between the central and regional governments must be systematically implemented to prevent regulatory disharmony. This study concludes that improving administrative oversight is key to ensuring water utilization is carried out in accordance with the principles of ecological justice and state responsibility. Based on findings regarding the lack of accountability, increasing public participation is recommended as an important instrument for strengthening transparency and legitimacy in decision-making. The novelty of this article is reflected in recommendations based on the integration of administrative authority analysis ecological justice principles, resulting in adaptive, sustainable, and equitable policy directions.

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<sup>35</sup> I. Budiono and F. A. Y. Ramadhan, "Problematik Pengaturan Sumber Daya Air Dan Pemenuhan Hak Atas Air Bagi Masyarakat," *Simbur Cahaya: Journal of Water Law & Policy* 30, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.28946/sc.v30i2.2744>.

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The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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**A Comparative Study of Islamic Politics by Al Mawardi and Ibn Taymiyyah and Its Relevance to Modern Democratic Politics**

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**ABSTRACT**

The concept of Ahlu al-Halli wa al-‘Aqdi formulated by Al Mawardi in Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah represents an important foundation of classical Islamic political thought concerning leadership selection and governance. This study aims to analyze and critically examine Al Mawardi’s concept of Ahlu al-Halli wa al-‘Aqdi and its relevance to modern democratic politics from the perspective of Ibn Taymiyyah. The research employs a normative juridical and descriptive-analytical approach through the study of classical Islamic political literature and contemporary democratic systems. The findings indicate that Ahlu al-Halli wa al-‘Aqdi functioned as a representative body authorized to appoint and dismiss leaders based on criteria of justice, knowledge, and social influence. However, the mechanism differs significantly from modern democratic institutions such as the People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR), the House of Representatives (DPR), and Regional Representative Councils (DPRD), whose members are directly elected by the people through periodic elections. In Al Mawardi’s framework, leadership succession tended to be elitist and limited to certain authoritative groups. From Ibn Taymiyyah’s perspective, the legitimacy of political authority should prioritize public welfare (maslahah) and justice, allowing flexibility in governance systems according to social and political contexts. The study concludes that although the concept of Ahlu al-Halli wa al-‘Aqdi remains relevant as an ethical foundation for leadership and representation, its implementation requires contextual reinterpretation to align with democratic principles, public participation, accountability, and modern constitutional governance.



When viewed from the Ahlu al-Halli wa al-Aqdi system in the appointment of leaders, it is very different from the current democratic system which is held in general or the people who elect a leader. The implementation of Ahlu al-Halli wa al-Aqdi is very irrelevant to today's times because many democratic countries hold the election of leaders by way of general elections or directly elected by the people, so with this study the author takes an analysis knife based on the opinion of Ibn Taymiyyah who also discusses the selection of prospective leaders so that in this study the author gives the title: "*Analysis of al-Mawardi's political concept of Ahlu al-Halli wa al-aqdi and its relevance to modern democratic politics from the perspective of Ibn Taymiyyah*".

## 2. Method

This research is included in the category of normative legal research. Normative legal research explains research that is carried out by collecting library materials or secondary data. In line with the explanation above, normative legal research is included in *library research*.<sup>43</sup> In line with this type of research that uses normative legal research methods, the approach that is suitable for this research is a qualitative approach. Qualitative which is descriptive, that is, all the data used are not numbers but words. In this study, the method used is a qualitative research method in the form of *library research*, which is a study that uses library materials or uses library materials as a source of data by collecting sources of opinion from Al Mawardi.

To obtain these research materials, this research will be carried out with a literature study in which legal materials are examined, and the legal materials in the research are taken from literature materials in the form of primary legal materials, secondary legal materials, tertiary legal materials and non-legal materials.<sup>44</sup>

- a. Primary legal material containing Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah
- b. Secondary legal materials as legal materials that are closely related to primary legal materials for data analysis include: other books of Fiqh Siyasah such as the Qur'an, hadith, fiqh books asy-siyasah. Website, journal.
- c. Related scientific books, articles, journals, websites.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Biography of Imam Al Mawardi

The name of Al Mawardi is Abu Hasan Ali bin Muhammad bin Habib al-Mawardi al Bashri. Al-Mawardi was born in Bashrah in 364H (975 AD). Al Mawardi's childhood was spent in the city of Baghdad until he grew up. Al Mawardi was a popular Islamic thinker at his time and was also known as a figure of the Shafi'i madhhab and a high-ranking official during the Abbasid dynasty.<sup>45</sup>

Al-Mawardi's education was spent in Baghdad at a time when Baghdad was the center of civilization, education and science. He began to study religious science from childhood, especially the science of hadith with his contemporaries, such as Hasan bin Ali al-Jayili, Muhammad bin Ma'ali al-Azdi and Muhammad bin Udai al-Munqari. He studied and deepened various Islamic sciences from the great scholars in Baghdad. Al-Mawardi is one of those who is never satisfied with knowledge. He always moves from one teacher to another to gain knowledge.<sup>46</sup>

Masa kehidupan al-Mawardi ditandai dengan suasana dan kondisi disintegrasi politik dalam pemerintahan Daulah Bani Abbasiyyah. Pada masa itu Baghdad yang merupakan pusat pemerintahan

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<sup>43</sup> M Luthfillah Maulana, "Sanctions for Plagiarists of Scientific Papers from a Positive Legal Perspective and Islamic Law," 2025.

<sup>44</sup> Achmad Arif, Fazari Zul Hasmi Kanggas, *RESEARCH METHODS OF ISLAMIC LAW AND LAW*, 1ST ED. (Ponorogo: UNIDA Gontor Press, 2025).

<sup>45</sup> Asral Wadi and Mulyanto Abdullah Khayr, "The Study of Islamic Educational Thought of Imam Al-Mawardi," *Nian Tana Sikka: Student Scientific Journal* 2, no. 4 (2024): 153–76, <https://doi.org/10.59603/niantanasikka.v2i4.465>.

<sup>46</sup> Ayuni Anggun Pratiwi, "Islamic Political Thought: A Study of Al-Mawardi's Thought and Its Relevance in Indonesia," *Journal of Islamic Economics and Finance Studies* 3, no. 2 (2025): 198–211.

The Banu Abbas were unable to stem the tide of the desire of the regions it controlled to break away from the Banu Abbas and form autonomous regions.

Al Mawardi died on the 30th of the month of Rabi'ul Awal in the year 450 hijrah equivalent to May 27, 1058 AD. At that time he was 86 years old. Many dignitaries and scholars attended Al Mawardi's funeral. Al-Mawardi's body was buried in the Bab Harb cemetery of Mansur City in Baghdad.

### 3.2 Al Mawardi's Political Thought

Al-Mawardi's political thought emphasized the need for an imamah (leadership) to maintain religion and govern the world, which was held by an imam whose job it was to uphold Islamic justice and law. He proposed that the election of imams should be through two main ways: through election by the Ahlu Ikhtiyar (qualified voters) or through appointment by the previous imam.<sup>47</sup> Al-Mawardi also emphasized the importance of stability, unity, and resistance to the uprising, as well as the need for state financial institutions (Baitul Maal) to meet the basic needs of citizens. The following is the structure of the implementation of the concept of government initiated by Al Mawardi:

- a. **Baitul Maal:** Permanent state financial institutions are needed to manage state revenues from various sources and distribute them according to their respective allocations to meet the basic needs of citizens.
- b. **Hierarchy of officials:** Al-Mawardi also explains the structure of government, including the role of the caliph and the role of the vizier (minister) who acts as the right hand of the head of state and comes from the Quraysh tribe, as well as other ministries tasked with implementing policies without the authority to formulate them independently.
- c. **The concept of the social contract:** Al-Mawardi argued that the relationship between the caliph and the people was a social contract, which later inspired European thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, Montesque, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau.

Al-Mawardi emphasized that state leadership is an instrument to continue the prophetic mission to preserve religion and govern the world. Religious observance and regulation are two different types of activities, but they are symbolically related. Both are two-dimensional of prophetic missions.<sup>48</sup>

### 3.3 What is the Concept of Ahlu al-Halli Wa al-Aqdi?

Linguistically, Ahlu al-Halli Wa al-Aqdi consists of three words. Ahlu means the one who owns or the person who has rights, al-Halli means to relinquish, adjust, dissolve, and "Aqdi means to bind, to make transactions, to form. So Ahlu al-Halli Wa al-'Aqdi are people who have the right or authority to determine, solve, or decide a problem, and the decision is binding.

There are several other meanings. According to Abd Al Hamid Anshori that Ahl-al-Hall Wa al Aqdi is to formulate people who have authority and who decide matters about the state and the people based on the principle of togetherness (deliberation). Meanwhile, according to Abu A'la al-Maududi, Ahlu al-Halli Wa al-Aqdi is a representative institution that accommodates and channels the aspirations of a community, and has the authority to issue legal provisions or laws on a case so that this institution is said to be a legislative institution.<sup>49</sup>

Al-Mawardi in his book *Al-Ahkam As-Sulthoniyah* explains two mechanisms that can be used to elect the head of state

*"The appointment of Imamah (Leadership) can be done in two ways; the first by election by Ahlul Aqdi wal Halli, the second by the previous Imam (Caliph)".<sup>50</sup>*

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<sup>47</sup> M Amin, "Political Thought," *Journal of Prophetic Politics* 4, no. 2 (2016): 118–36.

<sup>48</sup> Syamsuddin Ramadhan, *Re-Establishing the Islamic Caliphate* (Jakarta: Panjimas, 2003).

<sup>49</sup> Rashda Diana, "Al-Mawardi and the Concept of Statehood in Islam," *Tsaqafah* 13, no. 1 (2017): 157, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v13i1.981>.

<sup>50</sup> Imam Al Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam As-Sulthaniyyah: The Laws of State Administration in Islamic Sharia* (Jakarta: Darul Falah, 2020).

Al-Mawardi does not provide a direct definition of what is meant by Ahlul Halli Wa Al-Aqdi. He only gave a new concept in the appointment of a king apart from the giving of mandates that had been carried out for generations by the Abbasid dynasty and previous dynasties.<sup>51</sup>

There are three most important categories that are requirements to become a member in the concept of Ahlul Halli Wa al-Aqdi, among which are the following:

- a. Has the nature of 'Fair which includes all its conditions
- b. Having knowledge that with his knowledge he knows who has the right to be the leader on the condition that the Imam is ultimately
- c. Having an opinion (ra'yu) and wisdom that with both can choose who is the best to become an Imam and the strongest and the best at taking care of benefits.

### **3.4 Comparison of the concept of *Ahlu Al-Halli Wa Al-Aqdi* between Al-Mawardi and Ibn Taymiyyah**

Al Mawardi has originated the concept of Ahlu Al-Halli Wa Al-Aqdi by categorizing three things to its members, namely fairness, broad knowledge, and being able to choose what is good and bad. Al Mawardi also referred to Ahlu Al-Halli Wa Al-Aqdi as Ahlu al-Khiyar (the group that has the right to vote). The role of this group is very important to choose one of the Ahl al-Imamah (those who have the right to be elected) to become the caliph.<sup>52</sup>

However, one of the famous scholars from the land of Harran, namely Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Taymiyyah has the real name Taqiyuddīn Abū al-Abbas Ahmad bin Abdul Halim bin Abdussalam bin Taymiyyah.<sup>53</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah also has his own concept in the process of appointing prospective leaders, namely by holding elections conducted by the people on prospective leaders. The community in choosing leaders must choose the best among the best people. This view of Ibn Taymiyyah, because indeed choosing a leader is part of the religious mandate. Although of course in reality, according to him, a person only exerts his *ijtihad* ability according to his ability in choosing a leader. However, at least one will be relieved of the responsibility (trust) in choosing this leader in the scales of Islamic teachings.<sup>54</sup>

With the election carried out by the people, the assessment is more focused on the object of the prospective leader must have the ability to carry out his duties well, such as administrative skills, military capabilities, knowledge of the law, and high integrity.<sup>55</sup>

### **3.5 Is the concept of *Ahlu al-Halli wa al-aqdi* relevant to the modern democratic system**

Democracy as the basis of state life conveys the understanding that the people have the right to vote in politics which will later determine the people's lives in the future.<sup>56</sup> Modern democracies hold the election of candidate leaders with general elections, meaning that the election of leaders depends on the number of votes voted by the people against one of the candidate leaders. When viewed from the concept of *Ahlu Al-Halli Wa Al-Aqdi* which was initiated by Al Mawardi. Al Mawardi stated that the selection of candidate leaders must be carried out by *the Ahlu Al-Halli Wa Al-Aqdi* party where the selection of leaders is carried out through deliberation and giving testimony.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ahmad Abdul Mujib, "The Implementation Of The Concept Of Ahlul Halli Wa Al-'Aqdi Al-Mawardi In The Process Of Electing Kpk Leaders By The Dpr," 2015.

<sup>52</sup> Kadenun, "The Position of Ahlu Al-Halli wa Al-'Aqdi in Islamic Government."

<sup>53</sup> Kasman Bakry et al., "The Concept of Islamic State Leadership (A Comparative Study of the Thought of Al-Mawardi and Ibn Taymiyah)," *NUKHBATUL 'ULUM: Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 1 (2021): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.36701/nukhbah.v7i1.201>.

<sup>54</sup> Husna Hisaba Kholid, "AL-AFKAR : Journal for Islamic Studies Ibn Taymiyah's Political Thought on Leadership and Its Relevance to the Criteria for Candidates for People's Leaders in Indonesia" 7, no. 4 (2024): 1505–21, <https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v7i4.1145>.

<sup>55</sup> Moch. Azis Qoharuddin, "Ibn Taymiyah's Concept of Political Leadership in Islam," *El-Faqih : Journal of Islamic Thought and Law* 5, no. 1 (2019): 28–42, <https://doi.org/10.29062/faqih.v5i1.19>.

<sup>56</sup> Syaiful Asmi Hasibuan and National General Elections, "General Election System in Relation to" 17, no. April (2023): 602–9.

<sup>57</sup> Abu Sahrin and Farid Adnir, "Democracy in the Islamic World Al-Mawardi's Perspective," *Journal of Human And Education* 4, no. 5 (2024): 81–87, <https://jahe.or.id/index.php/jahe/index>.

Al Mawardi did not explain the concept of general elections, the election of leaders was carried out in two ways. First, Appointment by voluntary means, which is carried out through Election by the caliph. Second, Appointment by Force, where a regional head controls the territory using weapons and then he is appointed by the imam (caliph) to become the ruler of the territory and is given the authority to manage and organize it.<sup>58</sup>

Of course, the election of leaders initiated by Al Mawardi is not the same as the current concept of modern democratic elections, as the previous author's analysis is that the modern democratic system carries out the election of leaders by the way of elections carried out by the people. In contrast to Ibn Taymiyyah who stated that general elections conducted by the people are legitimate, in this case the author considers that Ibn Taymiyyah is also not rigid in the systematics of selecting candidate leaders, the most important thing is that the leader is chosen because he is capable, trustworthy, the people like him and able to uphold justice and shari'a. Then if in the government of a leader there is a mistake or tyranny, then

In a democracy, a leader is required to have broad insight and foresight, especially in understanding and directing the achievement of national goals. Leaders need to be able to translate national goals into operational and realistic visions, in line with the dynamics of the nation's development. In addition, it must be consistent in realizing this vision through the formulation of the right mission and strategy, and be able to optimize all existing national resources. Not only that, visionary leaders must also have the ability to convince the people of their mission and strategy, and be able to direct and mobilize the community to jointly achieve national goals.<sup>59</sup>

If you look at the concept of elections that are more relevant and the same as today's situation, Ibn Taymiyyah is the election that is carried out directly by the people against the candidate leader because basically the people in choosing leaders must choose the best among the best people.

**Table 1.** Comparison of the Implementation of Leader Election According to Al Mawardi and Ibn Taymiyyah

No	Aspects	Al Mawardi	Ibnu Taimiyyah
1	Leadership Selection	Choosing leaders based on two categories, namely ahlu Halli wa al Aqdi and leaders are determined by the previous leaders and do not justify the concept of election by the people	The election of leaders can be done directly by the people with the aim that the people can give an assessment of whether the candidate for leader is qualified to lead and do justice
2	The Source of Legitimacy of Power	Tends to be more compromised; As long as the leader maintains stability, there must be no rebellion	Criticizing tyrannical rulers, even supporting resistance if the leader deviates from the sharia
3	Model of Government	The people are submissive; Control is more in the hands of religious elites	Important: the people have the right to reject unjust leaders; There is a spirit of social control
4	Attitudes towards Political Reality	Rigidity in the structure of the caliphate; does not open up space for other systems	Adaptive and contextual: can choose a non-caliphate system if maslahat

<sup>58</sup> Al Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam Sulthaniyah: The System of Government of the Islamic Caliphate* (Jakarta: Al-Azhar Press, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> Siti Zuhro, "Democracy and Transformative Leadership," *Himmah: Journal of Contemporary Islamic Studies* 5, no. 2 (2021): 359, <https://doi.org/10.47313/jkik.v5i2.1463>.

## 4. Conclusion

The research conducted by the author can be concluded that the concept of choosing a leader candidate that is relevant and the same as the current democratic system is a concept initiated by Ibn Taymiyyah, where Ibn Taymiyyah allows the selection of leaders to be done directly by the people with the aim that the people can give an assessment of whether the candidate for leader is worthy to lead and do justice, and this is the same as what is taught in the concept of democracy that he is in teaching the concept of justice and rights for the people, Ibn Taymiyyah also stated:

*"Imamah was established for the benefit of the people. The purpose of leadership is to uphold religion and regulate world affairs according to the sharia."*

Meanwhile, Al Mawardi only emphasized that the election of leaders is divided based on two categories, namely *ahlu Halli wa al Aqdi* and leaders are determined by the previous leader and do not justify the concept of election by the people. Al-Mawardi rejects the concept of direct election of leaders by the people (in the sense of modern democracy) because he lives in a very elitist and hierarchical context of classical Islamic politics and thought. He views that the people in general do not have the authority or capacity to elect leaders.

Therefore, the concept of electing leaders in democratic systems such as legislative institutions (lawmakers, electing presidents and dismissing presidents) such as the People's Consultative Assembly, the House of Representatives, and the Regional Representative Council is currently closer to what was stated by Ibn Taymiyyah than Al Mawardi. This is due to Ibn Taymiyyah's view that provides wider and flexible opportunities for the involvement of the general public in the process of selecting leaders. He emphasized that the legitimacy or legitimacy of a ruler is not solely determined by formal procedures or a certain social background, but by the extent to which the leader is able to uphold the values of justice and consistently enforce the laws of Allah (Islamic law). In addition, Ibn Taymiyyah also opened up the possibility that the consent of the ummah that can be realized through bai'at or other forms of collective participation is an important element in building the legitimacy of power. In contrast, Al-Mawardi emphasizes a structural and elitist approach, where the process of selecting leaders is limited to a limited circle consisting of religious figures, lawyers, and political leaders known as Ahl al-Halli wa al-'Aqdi. This approach indirectly removes the direct involvement of the general public from the mechanism of appointing leaders, so that the participation of the people is only passive and not decisive in the process.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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## **Environmental Politics in the Implementation of Waste Management: A Study of the Environment Agency of West Lampung Regency**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the role of environmental politics in the implementation of waste management by the West Lampung Regency Environmental Agency (DLH). The volume of waste that reaches around 120 tonnes per day, with only 70% effectively managed, presents a critical governance challenge. Using Piers Blaikie's theory of Political Ecology, this qualitative field research was conducted through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation analysis. The findings of the study show that although DLH has a clear regulatory foundation, especially Regional Regulation Number 15 of 2013 and Regent Regulation Number 48 of 2018, its implementation faces significant obstacles. These obstacles include infrastructure limitations such as lack of adequate landfills and transport fleets, inadequate budget allocation for operations and maintenance, uneven distribution of waste services between sub-districts (some remote areas are unreachable), and low community participation which only reaches 35% in sorting activities and levy payments. This low participation is exacerbated by weak environmental awareness and lack of strict sanctions. This study concludes that strengthening DLH's institutional capacity, increasing regional budget commitments in a sustainable manner, and developing participatory and ecologically fair community involvement are absolute requirements to achieve sustainable waste management in West Lampung. On top of these three pillars, the gap between policy and practice will continue to widen, threatening the environment and social justice.

# 1. Introduction

The problem of waste management is one of the most pressing environmental challenges in the modern development era. Along with the increasing population, urbanization, and increasingly complex community consumption patterns, the volume of waste produced continues to increase from year to year. This condition not only has an impact on the quality of the environment, but also has implications for public health, regional aesthetics, and the sustainability of the ecosystem as a whole. In the context of sustainable development carried out by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), good waste management is one of the important indicators of the success of regional development. The Government of Indonesia has given its commitment to the SDGs through Presidential Regulation No. 59 of 2017 concerning the Implementation of the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>60</sup>

West Lampung Regency is one of the areas in Lampung Province that is facing serious challenges in waste management. As an area that continues to experience population growth and economic dynamics, West Lampung is faced with an increase in waste generation which reaches an average of 120 tons per day. However, the available waste management and transportation capacity is only able to reach around 70% of the total volume, so that around 30% of waste is still accumulating in the community due to limited facilities and transportation facilities.

This problem cannot be seen solely as a technical-administrative issue. From an environmental political perspective, waste management is part of a political process that involves power relations, public policy, economic interests, and the values of sustainability and ecological justice. The Theory of Political Ecology developed by Piers Blaikie emphasizes that environmental problems are the result of interactions between power structures, state policies, and socio-economic conditions of society. Thus, the failure or success of waste management is highly determined by how local governments carry out their political roles and capacities, as well as how the relationship between the state and the community is built in the process of implementing policies.<sup>61</sup>

Allah SWT says in the Qur'an Surah Al-A'rāf verse 56 which means: "And do not do any damage to the earth after it has been created. Pray to Him with fear and hope. Indeed, Allah's mercy is very near to those who do good." This verse affirms the responsibility of humans to preserve the earth and prevent environmental damage, including in the context of waste management. In the perspective of Islamic Political Thought, environmental management is a collective obligation that must be realized through public policies that are fair, effective, and oriented towards the common good.<sup>62</sup>

Departing from this background, this study aims to analyze two main problems: first, how the condition of landfills and waste management in West Lampung Regency is based on data and field reality; and second, how environmental governance in West Lampung Regency starts from the final disposal system (TPA), the implementation of the 3R program (reduce, reuse, recycle), to existing regulations and policies reviewed from the perspective of environmental politics. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of the perspective of political ecology with Islamic ethical values in analyzing regional waste management policies.

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<sup>60</sup> The SDGs were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 through Resolution A/RES/70/1, encompassing 17 global development goals to be achieved by 2030. Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) are directly related to waste management. See: Presidential Regulation Number 59 of 2017 concerning the Implementation of the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

<sup>61</sup> Piers Blaikie is a British political geographer who pioneered the Political Ecology approach through his work *The Political Economy of Soil Erosion in Developing Countries* (1985). Together with Harold Brookfield, he developed this concept further in *Land Degradation and Society* (1987), which became a major reference in environmental studies based on power relations and socio-economic structures.

<sup>62</sup> QS. Al-A'rāf [7]: 56. In the commentary of Al-Mishbah, M. Quraish Shihab explains that the word "fasād" (damage) includes all forms of destruction of nature, including environmental pollution due to irresponsible waste management. See: Shihab, M. Q. (2021). *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, Vol. 5. Jakarta: Lentera Hati.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Environmental Politics and Political Ecological Theory**

Environmental politics is a branch of political science that discusses the relationship between public policy, power, political actors, and economic and social interests in environmental management. Different from the technical-managerial approach, environmental politics views ecological issues as the result of a political process that involves the state, society, and the private sector in determining the direction of sustainable development. This study emphasizes that environmental damage, including the waste management crisis, cannot be separated from the dynamics of power and resource distribution.

The Theory of Political Ecology developed by Piers Blaikie is the main analytical framework in this study. Blaikie argues that environmental degradation is the product of unequal socio-economic relations, in which ecological conditions are directly influenced by local, national, and even global power structures. In his work with Harold Brookfield, Blaikie asserts that the environment is a political arena in which there are unfair relations of interests and distribution of resources. This framework is relevant to analyze why waste management policies in West Lampung have not run optimally even though regulations have been available.<sup>63</sup>

Previous studies show that the West Lampung Regional Government already has a legal basis in the form of Regent Regulation Number 48 of 2018, but its implementation has not been running optimally due to various technical and institutional obstacles. Previous studies also analyzed that waste management at the sub-district level in West Lampung is constrained by limited infrastructure and low community participation. The fundamental difference between this study and previous studies lies in the use of a political ecology perspective that integrates the dimensions of science, economics, ethics, and Islamic values in a holistic analytical framework.

### **2.2 Waste Management Policy in a Legal Perspective**

Waste management in Indonesia is regulated by Law Number 18 of 2008 concerning Waste Management which requires local governments to implement a waste management system that includes reduction, sorting, collection, transportation, processing, and final processing. This law emphasizes that waste management is no longer seen as just a cleaning activity, but as part of efforts to protect the environment and improve the quality of public health.

Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management strengthens the government's obligation to maintain the quality of the environment as a constitutional right of every citizen. In the context of regional autonomy, the district government has full authority in formulating and implementing waste management policies according to the characteristics and needs of the region.<sup>64</sup>

In West Lampung Regency, the legal basis for waste management is strengthened by Regional Regulation Number 15 of 2013 concerning Public Order, which among other things regulates criminal sanctions for violators of waste disposal provisions. The Regency Government has also issued Regent Regulation Number 48 of 2018 concerning Household Waste Management Policies and Strategies as an implementation of the mandate of the law. This regulatory framework reflects the seriousness of local governments in tackling the waste problem, although the gap between regulation and implementation on the ground is still a major challenge.

### **2.3 Operationalization of Political Ecology Theory in Waste Management Analysis**

In this study, Piers Blaikie's theory of Political Ecology is operationalized through three interrelated analytical dimensions. First, the structural-relational dimension, namely analyzing how the power relationship between the central government, local governments, and the community shapes the distribution pattern of waste management services. Blaikie (1985) asserts that ecological conditions are inseparable from the socio-economic and political structures that underlie them.

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<sup>63</sup> Blaikie, P., & Brookfield, H. (1987). *Land Degradation and Society*. London: Methuen, hlm. 17. Blaikie dan Brookfield defines political ecology as the study that combines ecological concerns with broad political economy, encompassing the study of the impact of social, economic, and political pressures on environmental change.

<sup>64</sup> Law Number 18 of 2008 concerning Waste Management, Article 5, stipulates that the government and local governments are tasked with ensuring the implementation of good and environmentally sound waste management. Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management, Article 65, affirms the right of everyone to a good and healthy environment as part of human rights.

Second, the policy-implementation dimension, namely examining the gap between existing regulations and the reality on the ground. Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) argue that environmental policy failures are often caused by mismatches between top-down regulatory frameworks and limited local institutional capacity. In the context of West Lampung, Regional Regulation No. 15 of 2013 and Perbup No. 48 of 2018 have been normatively available, but their implementation is hampered by budget and infrastructure limitations.

Third, the dimension of ecological participation and justice, namely examining the extent to which the community is involved in the decision-making process and implementation of environmental policies. Bryant and Bailey (1997) expand on Blaikie's framework by emphasizing the importance of the involvement of non-state actors, including local communities and civil society groups, in equitable environmental governance. The low participation of the community in the waste bank program in West Lampung (35%) indicates that the existing approach has not been able to encourage systemic behavioral transformation.<sup>65</sup>

### **3. Method**

This research is a field research with a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to describe systematically, factually, and accurately the phenomenon of waste management policy in the perspective of environmental politics. The nature of this research is descriptive analytical, namely describing the actual conditions of waste management and then analyzing it through the framework of political ecology theory. The research location is focused on the West Lampung Regency Environmental Agency and Pekon Sebarus, Balikbukit District, as the area with the highest volume of waste and the only sub-district that has the Bahway Final Disposal Site (TPA).

The data sources in this study consist of two types. First, primary data sources were obtained through in-depth interviews with five informants who were selected through purposive sampling based on position, authority, and knowledge of the problems being studied. The five informants are: (1) Amri, S.H., M.Hum. as the Head of the West Lampung Regency Environmental Agency; (2) Ardiansyah Fikri as Head of Cleanliness Division of DLH; (3) Melky Dafirzata as the Head of Pekon Sebarus; (4) Indra as the Chairman of RT/RW Pekon Sebarus; and (5) Yulia Guntari as a representative of the local community. Second, secondary data sources are obtained from the DLH Annual Report, LKJIP 2024, DLH Strategic Plan 2025-2029, as well as relevant laws and regulations.

Data collection was carried out through three main methods: in-depth interviews, direct observation of waste management conditions in the field, and documentation analysis. Data analysis was carried out in a qualitative descriptive manner following three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and verification and drawing conclusions. The validity of the data is ensured through source triangulation, which is comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation to obtain a comprehensive understanding that can be accounted for academically.<sup>66</sup>

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1 Landfill and Waste Management Conditions in West Lampung Regency**

Based on data from the West Lampung Regency Environmental Agency and the results of field observations, the volume of waste generation in this area shows a worrying condition. The average waste production reaches around 120 tons per day, but only about 70% is managed properly, while the remaining 30% is still piling up in the community due to limited facilities and transportation facilities.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Bryant, R. L., & Bailey, S. (1997). *Third World Political Ecology*. London: Routledge, pp. 38–45. Bryant and Bailey expand on Blaikie's concept of political ecology by including the dimension of non-state actors (NGOs, civil society, and local communities) as active agents in environmental governance in developing countries.

<sup>66</sup> The descriptive qualitative approach in this study refers to Moleong, L. J. (2019). *Qualitative Research Methodology*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, and Sugiyono. (2018). *Qualitative Research Methods*. Bandung: Alfabeta. The source triangulation technique is used to ensure the validity of the data by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation analysis.

<sup>67</sup> An interview with Amri, S.H., M.Hum., Head of the West Lampung Regency Environmental Office, was held on March 10, 2025 at the West Lampung Regency DLH Office, Liwa. Waste generation data is sourced from the 2023 West Lampung Regency DLH Annual Report and SIPSN/KLHK documents.

**Tabel 1. Waste Landfill in West Lampung Regency in 2022–2025**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Waste Generation (tons/year)</i>	<i>Source/Notes</i>
2022	± 47.220	Stockpile data per day 129.37 tons × 365 days (DLH Lampung Province)
2023	± 47.654,35	2023 Waste Generation Report (SIPSN/KLHK)
2024	± 47.654,35	Data collection status data has not been fully reported to SIPSN
2025	± 46.640 (projection)	Projection of Bappeda of Lampung Province (~127.72 tons/day × 365)

*Source: West Lampung Regency Environmental Agency*

Of all existing sub-districts, Balik Bukit District is recorded as the area with the highest volume of waste, which is around 30 to 35 tons per day. Balik Bukit is also the only sub-district that has a two-hectare Bahway Final Disposal Site (TPA), although with a very limited management capacity. Meanwhile, other sub-districts such as Way Tenong, Sekincau, and Sumber Jaya each produce between 10 to 20 tons of waste per day, but do not have an adequate management system and still rely on open disposal or incineration.

This condition was confirmed by the Head of DLH West Lampung Regency, Amri, S.H., M.Hum., who emphasized that the limited fleet of waste transportation and the lack of a standard number of Temporary Shelters (TPS) are the main obstacles in waste management. In addition, the level of community participation in the new waste bank program reached around 35% of total households, far below the expected target.

#### **4.2 Environmental Governance: Landfills, 3R Programs, and Regulations in West Lampung Regency**

Referring to Blaikie's theory of political ecology, effective environmental governance demands integration between regulatory policies, infrastructure capacity, and community participation. In the context of West Lampung Regency, this study finds three main dimensions of environmental governance that need to be studied in depth. First, the management dimension of landfills (TPA). The Bahway Landfill, located in Balik Bukit District, is the only final disposal facility in West Lampung Regency. With an area of only two hectares, the capacity of this landfill is far from adequate to accommodate the generation of waste which reaches 120 tons per day. The Head of Cleanliness Division of DLH, Ardiansyah Fikri, said that the management system at the Bahway Landfill still uses an open dumping method that does not meet sanitary landfill standards as mandated by laws and regulations. This condition is a clear reflection of the gap between regulation and implementation identified by Blaikie as the root of the problem in the environmental crisis in developing countries.

Second, the dimension of implementing the 3R program (reduce, reuse, recycle). DLH West Lampung Regency has initiated the waste bank program as the main instrument for the implementation of the 3R. However, the level of community participation in this program has only reached 35% of the total households. The Head of Pekon Sebarus, Melky Dafirzata, revealed that its residents need support in the form of proper TPS facilities and a regular transportation schedule so that community-based hygiene programs can run consistently. The Chairman of RT/RW Pekon Sebarus, Indra, added that the socialization of the 3R program is still sporadic and unsustainable. Meanwhile, Yulia Guntari, a representative of the local community, emphasized that the real economic incentives from the waste bank program have not been significantly felt by residents.

Third, the dimension of regulation and policy implementation. DLH West Lampung Regency has the authority stipulated in Regent Regulation No. 48 of 2018 to formulate policies, provide facilities and infrastructure, determine the location of polling stations and landfills, and conduct guidance and supervision. However, the Head of DLH Amri, S.H., M.Hum., revealed that the waste management

budget allocation is still not sufficient for ideal operational needs, especially for the procurement of new fleets and the construction of representative polling stations in all sub-districts.

#### **4.3 Political Ecology Analysis: Answering the Formulation of Waste Management Problems in West Lampung**

Using Blaikie's framework of political ecology, this study answers two formulations of the problem posed. First, the condition of landfill and waste management in West Lampung Regency shows a significant gap between production volume (120 tons/day) and management capacity (70%), with uneven service distribution only in Balik Bukit District that is fully served while other sub-districts depend on community independent initiatives. Blaikie explained that this condition is a product of an unequal power structure, where the distribution of environmental infrastructure reflects political priorities that favor the center of district government.

Second, environmental governance in West Lampung Regency which includes the management of the Bahway landfill, the 3R program through the waste bank, and the regulations of Regional Regulation No. 15/2013 and Perbup No. 48/2018 reviewed from the perspective of environmental politics show three main gaps: (a) the regulation-implementation gap, where existing policies have not been accompanied by adequate institutional and budgetary capacity; (b) service distribution gap, which reflects ecological injustice between the sub-districts served and those that do not; and (c) community participation gaps, where the 3R program has not been implemented systematically and community-based. Integration of Islamic perspectives through QS. Al-A'rāf [7]:56 which prohibits *fasād* on earth affirms that the failure of waste management is a moral-political responsibility that demands the commitment of the state in ensuring ecological justice for the entire people of West Lampung.

#### **4.4 DLH Strategic Plan Data Analysis 2025–2029: Institutional Capacity and Performance Targets**

The Strategic Plan Document (Renstra) of the West Lampung Regency Environment Agency for 2025–2029 provides a comprehensive overview of the actual institutional conditions and environmental management performance targets for the next five-year period. The data in this document reinforce and complement the field findings obtained through in-depth interviews with the key informants of this study.

In terms of human resources, the Strategic Plan noted that as of July 23, 2025, DLH West Lampung has 30 ASN (PNS and PPPK) and 194 non-ASN personnel, with details of 148 cleaning technical personnel, 26 landscaping personnel, 14 Bahway TPA personnel, and 3 environmental laboratory personnel. This composition shows that the waste management workload is fully supported by non-ASN personnel, which has implications for staffing instability and the potential for a decline in service quality in the long term.

In terms of facilities and infrastructure, the Strategic Plan noted that DLH has 11 units of 6-wheeled vehicles (garbage trucks), 13 units of 3-wheeled vehicles, and 7 units of 4-wheeled vehicles, as well as 5 units of buildings. This transportation fleet is clearly inadequate to serve 15 sub-districts with an average volume of waste generation of 120 tons per day. Head of Hygiene Ardiansyah Fikri said that the waste transportation ridiculous in the served area is still not optimal, some areas in Balik Bukit District have only received transportation services 2-3 times per week, far from the ideal daily standard.

In terms of waste performance, the Strategic Plan noted that waste management from 15 sub-districts only covers 1 sub-district, namely Balik Bukit District. Data shows an increase in waste handling from 6,137.84 tons/year in 2021 to 13,068.68 tons/year or 28.28% in 2023, but this figure is still very far from the ideal need. In terms of budget, Strategic Plan data shows that DLH's total budget has increased from Rp. 14,061,713,882.00 (2021) to Rp. 15,382,236,611.00 (2024), but this value is still disproportionate compared to the waste infrastructure investment needs for 15 sub-districts.

In Blaikie's political ecology perspective, the non-transparency of public resource allocation is an indication of the weak democratization of environmental governance in favor of the interests of marginalized communities. This problem shows that waste management concerns power relations in environmental policy-making, the condition of waste is also a matter of ecological justice, where the state is required to ensure that the distribution of environmental services is carried out fairly, inclusively, and in favor of the interests of the wider community.

## 5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of waste management in West Lampung Regency still faces various structural challenges rooted in the weakness of the political capacity of local governments. Although DLH has a fairly strong regulatory foundation, marked by the existence of Regional Regulation No. 15 of 2013 and Perbup No. 48 of 2018, the gap between regulation and implementation is still very significant. This is characterized by the limited infrastructure of the Bahway landfill, uneven distribution of services, and low community participation which has only reached 35% of total households.

Environmental governance in West Lampung Regency, which includes the dimensions of landfills, 3R programs, and regulations, requires comprehensive reform. The Bahway landfill system needs to be upgraded from open dumping to sanitary landfill, the 3R program needs to be strengthened through real economic incentives and sustainable socialization, and existing regulations need to be accompanied by adequate budget and institutional capacity. The findings of this study prove that Blaikie's theory of political ecology is relevant in explaining how the waste management crisis in West Lampung is a manifestation of an unequal power structure and an unfair distribution of public resources.

Based on these findings, this study recommends: (1) gradually increasing the DLH budget allocation to meet the needs of transportation fleets and TPS infrastructure in all sub-districts; (2) the development of sustainable and community-based environmental socialization and education programs; (3) strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms with operationally measurable performance indicators; and (4) the development of a co-production model between DLH and the community through the empowerment of a pekon-based waste bank supported by real economic incentives. Further research is recommended to compare the effectiveness of community-based waste management models in various districts in Lampung Province.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors stated that there was no conflict of interest in this study.

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**COUNTERING RADICALISM FOR MILLENNIALS IN CYBERFACE  
IN THE 5.0 ERA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to counteract radicalism for millennials in the cyberface era 5.0, to work on qualitative methods, and to quote from secondary data such as articles and books and stuff. The research is almost conclusively kept that in the society 5.0 era, technological growth is increasing, and even more plausibly in cyberspace, it can make it easy for people to do things that go from sharing information to sharing information, with mainstream social media users being exploited by the millennials at the moment, looking at the overwhelming majority of youth-oriented social media users. Allowing radical groups to exploit this situation to influence millennials who must be extremely powerful. As for the effort that the millennials are able to counteract radicalism, social media literacy, by filtering out the information that is obtained first, does not accept the teachings received through the world; contribute to science by producing radical-related works so that others will also know about the radicalism and always make use of time with positivity.

## 1. Introduction

The existence of digital media is not only based on technical sophistication but also social and cultural value for its users. Digital media has replaced other media that are part of the basic needs of modern society. This type of technology is gaining more and more users because nowadays all information, entertainment, science, and hype are concentrated in digital media applications found in communication tools in the form of gadgets and smartphones.<sup>68</sup> Social media is like a double-edged sword, where it makes it easier for people to communicate but can cause danger to those who are less vigilant. Many people who have a narrow mindset and don't understand how social networks work use it to spread fake news or hoaxes. Fake, fake messages posted by these people are quickly proliferating massively in cyberspace and can mislead online media out of their control. In addition, fake news is sometimes polished in multiple languages, peppered with hate speech and slander, and associated with religion. This news spreads quickly, and social media users receive it without a strong filter.<sup>69</sup>

The Society 5.0 era ushered in a new tradition of using technology as a problem solver in all aspects of life to bring comfort to society, including in the issue of overcoming religion. Activities (deepening religious knowledge) are almost replaced by new media. The ease of access to new media is an advantage, because it is easy for each preacher to convey his teachings. Various patterns of da'wah delivery are used in the expansion of religious knowledge. As a stage of adjustment in the Society 5.0 era, smart da'wah efforts are called for by prioritizing moderate (inclusive) Islamic content by considering different elements of da'wah.<sup>70</sup> It is undeniable that the existence of social networks is increasing day by day; fast and easy communication makes people spend more time on social networks. In terms of communication, the use of social media is considered effective. Based on the accessibility dimension, with the help of social media, everyone can communicate with people who are far away, both outside the city and abroad. In addition to the incredible reach, social media access is also very easy and fast.<sup>71</sup>

In this modern or instant age, people will think faster, rely on the most accessible media, and, of course, rely on actuality when facing the turmoil of globalization. There are a lot of platforms at this time, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Zoom meetings, Facebook, YouTube, and so on. So a lot of application users usually have a lot of opinions, entertainment, experiences, teachings, and, last but not least, different groups, and actually teenagers who use a lot of content to understand Islamic teachings from the Internet because Generation Z is currently interested in innovative and fresh content.<sup>72</sup> The use of the internet may not have a positive effect on its users, such as making it easier and easier to communicate between individuals, but it also has negative effects such as the spread of radical views, terrorist attacks, and the rise of pornographic videos.

Social networks today, as a means of public communication, have become a need and habit of everyone. However, social media has become a vehicle for some people to spread fake news and hate speech, which can cause intolerance and radicalism in society. The Internet has become the main information portal for young people, or what is popularly called the millennial generation, because

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<sup>68</sup> Khiyaroh, I. (2022). The Practice of Islamic Da'wah in Digital Media and Its Influence. *Alamtara: Journal of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting*, 6(1).

<sup>69</sup> Era Yuniarto Taryadi1, "Efforts to Counteract Negative Content with Digital Literacy Training for the Young Generation," *Indonesian Journal of Community Service and Innovation (IJCOSIN)* 2, no. 2 (2022), <http://journal.itelkom-pwt.ac.id/index.php/ijcosin>.

<sup>70</sup> Mazaya, V. (2022). Smart Da'wah in the Era Society 5.0; Virtual Da'i in New Media. *Journal Of Da'wah AndCommunication*, 2(1).

<sup>71</sup> Annisa, N. (2020). *"The Effectiveness of Da'wah Through Social Media During the Pandemic"*. Department of Islamic Broadcasting Communication, IAIN, Parepare, Indonesia.

<sup>72</sup> Masruroh, S. A., & I. (2021) *"Da'wah Era Society 5.0 (Analysis of the Ust. Hanan Attaki", Gus Miftah and Gus Baha' on Social Media Youtube)"*. 5LPPM UNHASY TEBUIRENG JOMBANG NATIONAL SEMINAR

information is presented comprehensively and is very effective for communicating and influencing others. This also certainly does not rule out the possibility for radicals to spread their teachings. Therefore, digital skills are essential for the millennial generation to filter information spread on the internet.<sup>73</sup> Seeing the users of social media networks, which are mostly filled with teenagers, makes various radical groups take advantage of this situation to be able to influence millennials, who are certainly very vulnerable to being influenced. The various platforms they use, radical issues wrapped in millennial style, are more likely to be accepted.<sup>74</sup>

## 2. Literature Review

Several papers have discussed this study, such as B. Aisy (2019) shows that the government, in collaboration with BNPT, implements anti-radicalization programs through social media by inciting a sense of nationalism, and the government implements regulations in the form of Law Number 5 of 2018 concerning government formation. Law Number 1 of 2002 concerning the Eradication of Terrorism was replaced by a law, but there is no implementing regulation regulating counter-radicalization.<sup>75</sup> N. Picture (2017). The results of the study show that the strategies applied by Islamic religious teachers to prevent the spread of radicalism in MAN 1 are divided into two types, namely classroom learning strategies. H. through active learning methods and learning the Qur'an. Methods outside of learning in the classroom, namely, organizing various religious activities, forming services at school, and collaborating with the police, such as Sa. Bintal and Sa. Binmas in collaboration with the Provincial Ministry of Religious Affairs, organize workshops and religious counseling in schools.<sup>76</sup>

In line with the discussion above, this research will focus on the discussion of Counteracting radicalism for millennials in the cyberface of the 5.0 era. In order to provide beneficial implications, both theoretical and practical, Theoretically, this research is expected to have benefits as a development of Islamic treasures in terms of the scope discussed. On the other hand, of course, it can be used as a reference for the millennial generation so that they do not behave to extremes in receiving information in cyberspace (social media); more precisely, users are wiser in sorting out the information they get.

## 3. Method

"Method" can be interpreted as a way to move or do something in a systematic and orderly manner, which means following the flow of scientific thought that is generally in the world of research, in order to string together an idea or ideas that are directly related to the purpose or scenario of the research being carried out.<sup>77</sup> This research method uses a qualitative type through library *research*, literature *review* from previous research,<sup>78</sup> and quoting from various articles, books, and journals related to the discussion being studied. This research is also descriptive; the goal is to analyze and present data in real terms so that it is easy to understand. In this study, the researcher does not need a place to research but uses a lot of literature research techniques.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Oni Arizal.et.al Bastian, "*The Urgency of Digital Literacy in Counteracting Radicalism in the Millennial Generation in the Era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0,*" *Socio-Cultural Dynamics* 23, no. 1 (2021).

<sup>74</sup> Apri Wardana Ritonga, "The Concept of Internalizing Religious Moderation Values for the Millennial Generation Based on the Quran," *al-Afkar, Journal for Islamic Studies* 4, no. 1 (2021), [https://al-afkar.com/index.php/Afkar\\_Journal/issue/view/4](https://al-afkar.com/index.php/Afkar_Journal/issue/view/4).

<sup>75</sup> Bilqis Rihadatul Aisy.et.al, "*Enforcement of Counter-Radicalism through Social Media by the Government in Countering Radicalism,*" *Magnum Opus 2 Legal Journal*, no. 1 (2019).

<sup>76</sup> Noermala Sary, "*Preventing the Spread of Radicalism in Schools,*" *Manthiq* 2, no. 2 (2017)

<sup>77</sup> Fitri, A. Z. (2020). *Educational Research Methodology*.

<sup>78</sup> Darmalaksana, W. (2020b). "*Qualitative Research Methods for Literature Studies and Field Studies*". Article.

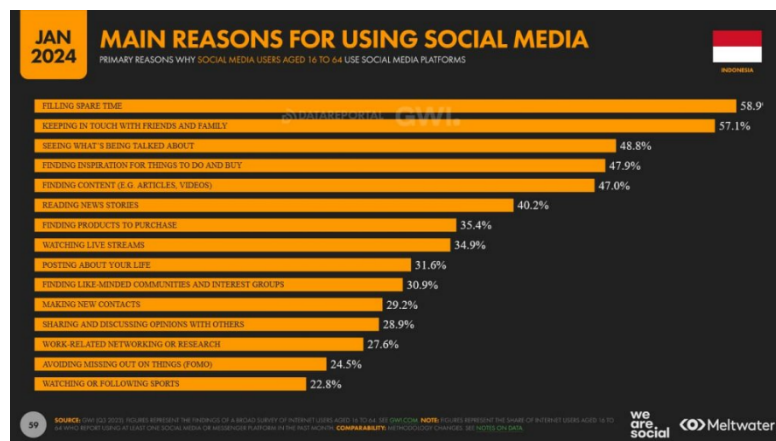
<sup>79</sup> Evi, T. (2020). Benefits of Guidance and Counseling for Students. *Junal Education and Counseling*, 2(1)

## 4. Results and Discussion

### a. Cyberface, Social Media, and Radicalism

"Cyberface" comes from English, which is interpreted as "cyberspace," or electronic media in a computer network, which is widely used for one-way and two-way (directly connected) Internet communication. This cyber world is an integration of various communication technology devices and computer networks (sensors, transducers, interfaces, transmissions, processors, signals, and controllers) that can interactively connect communication devices (computers, mobile phones, electronic devices, etc.) around the world. *"Sharing social knowledge, discussing, sharing thoughts and information, creating social support, business activities, direct actions, making artistic media, playing games, and even someone joining political discussions, and so on."* It is a benefit of cyberspace. "A conventional means of describing everything related to the internet and diverse internet cultures" is a term from cyberspace.<sup>80</sup> Today's cyberspace is certainly very significant for the establishment of thoughts, deeds, and behaviors as well as basic needs (lifestyle) of today's human life. Because it can be seen that nowadays almost everyone does their activities with social media.

The following are the results of active social media users:



Graph. Active users of social media 2024

Based on a GfK survey (2023–2025) of Indonesian internet users aged 16–64 who are active on social media in January 2024, the main motive for using the platform is dominated by the need for relaxation and social connection, namely filling free time (58.9%) and maintaining relationships with friends and family (57.1%). In addition, almost half of the respondents admitted that they are driven by curiosity about topics that are being discussed (48.8%) and looking for inspiration for activities and purchases (47.9%). These findings reflect that social media in Indonesia not only serves as a tool for interpersonal communication but also as a space for exploring trends and content, while motives such as uploading personal lives (31.6%), building new connections (29.2%), or overcoming the fear of missing out on information (24.5%) have a smaller portion. Thus, user behavior tends to be passive-receptive rather than active-expressive in the digital ecosystem.

### b. Social Media

<sup>80</sup> Aliwafa Aliwafa Nuruz Zakiya, "Public Relations Opportunities for Nurul Jadid Vocational School Through The Utilization of Virtual Community," Journal of education management research 1, no. 1 (2022).

In cyberspace, it is definitely inseparable from social media features. Social media are online platforms that allow users to easily participate, share, and create content on blogs, social networks, wikis, forums, and the virtual world. Blogs, social networks, and wikis are among the most commonly used forms of social media in society. travel around the world In other words, social media is a web-based means of social interaction connected to the internet that is designed to allow users to share information or stories; participate; communicate by sending messages; build relationships; and create networks to facilitate.<sup>81</sup> Various types of social media, including Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and so on. The role of information technology in this era is deeply rooted in human life. Information technology has an important role in meeting the increasing needs of society. Be it interaction, learning, reading the news, doing business, and more, everyone uses information technology products.

Traditional media has a global reach, but it costs a lot and takes longer to sustain. At the same time, social media users have no age limit; everyone can use it, starting from sending news quickly, which, of course, has no geographical barriers. Social media users also get a great opportunity to design content according to the goals and desires of many users. The many benefits of social media do not mean that it does not have *madharat*; therefore, it is not only limited to the benefits that need to be studied, but the madharat of social media itself must be considered and anticipated for its presence. Untrue news (*hoax*) is often found, especially the circulation of videos that have no benefit and are even able to damage the nation's generation (children). Not to mention the hate speech of netizens. These are some of the negative impacts that exist.<sup>82</sup>

c. Radicalism

Linguistically, the word "radicalism" comes from the Latin word "radix," which means "root." Giving rise to the attitude of the soul to bring about a change is the essence of radicalism. The demand for change by those who support this ideology is a drastic change, very different from the current system. The violence that they always use in order to achieve what they want. Radicalism is often associated with terrorism because radicals will do anything to kill their enemies. Radicalism is also often related to the movement of extremist groups within a particular religion<sup>83</sup>. The radicalism movement has a spirit that leads to actions aimed at weakening and changing the established order by replacing it with new ideas or understandings. The characteristics of radicalism include:

- 1) Claiming the true truth and misleading other groups with whom they disagree.
- 2) In essence, the teachings of Islam are *samhah*, or tolerant, by considering behavior, laws, and worship, but this is contrary to the understanding of radicalism, which always complicates the Islamic procedures adhered to.
- 3) Carrying out the teachings of Islamic sharia rituals with an excessive attitude
- 4) Absolutely, in interacting, they convey what they strongly believe will always be harsh (emotional) towards the interlocutor.
- 5) Always have a bad attitude towards those who do not agree with their teachings.

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<sup>81</sup> Engkos Kosasih, "Social Media Literacy in Correctional Attitudes of Religious Moderation," *Islamic Guidance Journal* 12, no. 1 (2019).

<sup>82</sup> Dinda Sekar Puspitarini, "The Utilization of Social Media as a Promotional Media (Descriptive Study on Happy Go Lucky House)," *Common Journal* 3, no. 1 (2019).

<sup>83</sup> Andang Sunarto, "The Impact of Social Media on Radicalism," *NUANSA (Journal of Islamic and Community Studies)* 10, no. 2 (2017).

- 6) Other groups that are considered to have different opinions are often disbelieved or easily labeled as fakirs.<sup>84</sup>
- d. A Glimpse of Radicalism on Social Media

The characteristics of social media that always make it easier for users to share information allow internet users to become message producers, thus opening up the possibility of the emergence of various messages that contain various ideologies and values, including radicalism. Radical groups are aware of this and use it to develop their ideology. Radical groups use social media because social media has many advantages for them, including communicating, sharing *information, fundraising, recruiting, and trading members and supporters of terrorist organizations around the world*. In addition, radical groups also use the internet for "*propaganda, incitement, training, planning, execution, cyber or cyber attacks, and intelligence gathering*." This is one way to make their part without having to have direct interaction with radical organizations.<sup>85</sup>

Propaganda practiced to spread radicalism is spread through various platforms, ranging from writing, images, memes, videos, and content, which are widely used by teenagers who make up the majority of active users of social media. Some social media features are also very supportive with quality and filters. For example, some cases of radicalism and terrorism that use internet media and social media are cases of ISIS that use audio-visual video formats.<sup>86</sup>

- e. Efforts to Counteract Radicalism for Millennials on Social Media

Radical groups often target millennials because the group thinks that millennials are still very easy to infiltrate, especially millennials who are experiencing a period of digital technology transition. A lot of fake information and news has emerged in cyberspace lately, or better known as fraud, by some irresponsible individuals. If you are not careful, teenagers can easily fall into the scam, although, of course, spreading false information can be very detrimental to the victim of defamation<sup>87</sup>. For this, of course, an action is needed, as for the actions that must exist in the millennial generation, including

- 1) Preventing narrow religious fanaticism by filtering the content of religious *tafsir*, which sometimes leads to radicalism, especially now that there are a lot of individuals who can disseminate it from social media networks, be it from YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and so on.

Increasing knowledge is not easy to receive from the information obtained, because by paying attention to the information heard, one of the methods is to avoid radicalism. This is because the information received is not always accurate and must be monitored, especially considering the development of technology today is increasingly advanced, where information can come from anywhere. This information filtering should be done in a way that avoids misunderstandings, making the correct information false and the wrong information true. Therefore, we must be able to filter the information received so as not to justify, blame, and directly affect the processing of the information.

- 2) Contribute to the prevention of radicalism by making a written work or a narrative with peaceful nuances, writing about strengthening the ideology of Pancasila. When a person is

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<sup>84</sup> Emna Laisa, "Islam and Radicalism," *Islamuna* 1, no. 1 (2014).

<sup>85</sup> Ratna Puspita, "COUNTER-RADICALIZATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN A COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE," *Journal of Communication of the University of Garut: Results of Thought and Research* 6, no. 2 (2020).

<sup>86</sup> Ahmad Kharis Mutrofin, "Deradicalization of Adolescents in Stemming Social Media Radicalism," *Journal of Sociology of Religion: Scientific Journal of Sociology of Religion and Social Change* 14, no. 2 (2020).

<sup>87</sup> Husna Sari Siregar Dahlia Lubis, "The Danger of Radicalism to the Morality of Adolescents through Information Technology (Social Media)," *APLICA: Journal of Religious Sciences Application* 20, no. 1 (2020).

unable to take action to prevent radicalism, then as a teenager who is always equipped with science, he must be able to provide its benefits to others. This can provide direction or information related to what radicalism actually is to others. So that later many people will understand the true meaning of radicalism, which is certainly very dangerous to the social environment, especially life that is lived together on the basis of pluralism or diversity. And provide teachings through writing about the efforts made to avoid the influence of radicalism, considering the dangers and impacts that exist.

- 3) Join groups that always have positive values, and increase activities that always have beneficial effects for yourself. And improve life together, so that they can understand what it means to live together because of the diversity that exists in society and even the state, including Indonesia itself. So that tolerance and solidarity need to be applied.<sup>88</sup>

In pursuing a strategy to ward off radicalism, it is not only carried out independently, but the researcher also adds several objects that play a role in this prevention, for example, the government. The government, which has the qualities and authority, can take advantage of this by collaborating with religious leaders, religious leaders who then optimize the use of the media as a means of radicalism. The internet and social media are a means for missionaries to spread their da'wah ideas. Missionaries display efforts to counter discourse in the form of presenting opinions and reviews of Islamic books and sermons but presented by holding on to strong evidence. Lemudian spreads various existing platforms. Not only that, there are also those who play an important role in the pursuit of this, which is through small rural villages. In this case it is very important to play an institutional role at the RT/RW level, village villages, sub-districts, and districts in socializing the understanding of radicalism.

## 5. Conclusion

In the era of Society 5.0, the development of technology is increasing; moreover, the characteristics of the cyber world can make people easily do everything from sharing information and providing information. Social media users who are often currently used by millennials, seeing that social media network users are mostly filled with teenagers, are making various radical groups take advantage of this situation to be able to influence millennials who are certainly very energetic to be influenced. The understanding of radicalism can be characterized by four attitudes, namely, a due to intolerance. This attitude is very common in Indonesia and does not foster an attitude of respect when there is a difference, i.e., fanaticism. This trait feels like it always feels the most right. c, exclusivity is a trait that tends to look negatively at a difference or distinguish themselves from the habits of most people; d, revolutionary nature, i.e., committing violence for what they want.

Currently, a lot of fake information and news are emerging in cyberspace, or better known as fraud, by some irresponsible individuals. If you are not careful, teenagers can easily fall into the scam, although, of course, spreading false information can be very detrimental to the victim of defamation. There are several efforts so that millennial children are not incited to understand radicalism; Social media literacy, by first filtering the information obtained, does not accept raw teachings obtained through the Maya world, making a scientific contribution by making written works related to radicalism so that others also know about the understanding of radicalism and always use time with positive things.

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<sup>88</sup> Syamsul Hadi Slamet Tri Wahyudi, "Pengoimalan Peran Penggiat Media Sosial Dalam Menangkal Radikalisme Didunia Maya," *Jurnal ESENSI HUKUM* 3, no. 2 (2021).

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## **The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama in Local Political Dynamics in North Sumatra in 2024**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to examine the role of Nahdlatul Ulama in local political dynamics in North Sumatra in 2024. NU as the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia has a significant influence on the social, cultural, and political life of the community. However, in practice, the involvement of religious organizations in the political sphere often faces the risk of politicization that can affect the independence of the organization. Therefore, this research is directed to understand the form of NU's role in local politics and the factors that influence this involvement. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. The informants in this study are the Deputy Chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama Regional Management (PWNU), the Deputy Secretary of the Nahdlatul Ulama Regional Management (PWNU), and the Katib of the Nahdlatul Ulama Regional Management (PWNU). The results of this study show that Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in local political dynamics plays a role that emphasizes moral, social, and educational functions rather than involvement in practical politics. The pattern of participation is influenced by social and religious factors that make NU play a role as the moral force of civil society in maintaining the harmony and quality of local democracy, which is carried out through the strategy of organizational neutrality and political education to the community.

## 1. Introduction

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) as one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia has a strategic role in local political dynamics, including in North Sumatra Province.<sup>89</sup> Since the 1998 reform era, the freedom to establish political parties and choose ideology has opened up a wider space for religious organizations to participate in practical politics.<sup>90</sup>

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) as the largest religious organization in Indonesia has played a significant political role since the colonial period to the reform era. Based on data from the Indonesian Democracy Index (IDI), one of the assessment indicators to measure the level of democracy is the aspect of citizens' political rights, namely the right to participate in politics<sup>91</sup>. During the Dutch colonial period, the NU began to show political firmness when the colonial government interfered in religious affairs, such as protesting against the withdrawal of the authority of the religious court in 1931 and rejecting the marriage law plan. During the Japanese occupation, NU experienced a serious clash when it rejected the seikeirei ritual which was considered contrary to the teachings of monotheism, even K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari was imprisoned for four months for his refusal.<sup>92</sup>

Nahdlatul Ulama has great capital to gain and maintain political influence through the pattern of obedience from the community to NU. This capital is an important force in local political dynamics<sup>93</sup>. NU maintains its influence by building religious educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools as a means of da'wah and through involvement in Islamic political parties.<sup>94</sup> These two approaches make the solidarity network more effective in achieving organizational goals.

Haris (2021) identifies two main reasons for NU's involvement in politics. First, the political network of Islamic boarding schools and traditional people serves as the main support base, so that the policies taken will receive support even if not from all levels of society. Second, the trust of the Muslim community, especially NU congregations, in NU's decision makes NU's political strength more solid in terms of internal solidarity.

NU's involvement in politics is not always smooth. Fathurrahman (2021) noted that in 1968, NU's political role and participation experienced negative segmentation, for example the grouping of voters or society which caused a significant decline in Islamic politics. This is due to the lack of responsiveness of Islamic leaders to the internal dynamics of the organization and limitations in the government's administrative capabilities.

In the context of North Sumatra's local politics in 2024, the role of NU is increasingly interesting to study considering the various dynamics that occur, both in the context of regional head elections, public policy, and social issues. In its development, elite theorists have experienced the problem of conceptualization frameworks<sup>95</sup>. Political power cannot be fully correlated with the number of supporters alone, but also depends on the ability of the organization to manage and utilize its social capital.

Based on this background, a study of the role of Nahdlatul Ulama in local political dynamics in North Sumatra in 2024 is important to understand how Indonesia's largest religious organization

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<sup>89</sup> Edward Aspinall and Mada Sukmajati, eds., *Electoral Dynamics in Indonesia: Money Politics, Patronage and Clientelism at the Grassroots* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2019).

<sup>90</sup> R William Liddle and Saiful Mujani, *Democracy and the Cartel of Parties in Indonesia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>91</sup> Social Studies, Taufiq Wijaya Giry, and Universitas Negeri Medan, "Student Political Participation in the 2023 Medan State University Elections (Study at Unimed PPKn Department)" 4, no. 2 (2024): 852–59.

<sup>92</sup> Merle C Ricklefs, *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java: A Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, c. 1930 to Present* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2018).

<sup>93</sup> Hannan, "Religious-Power Hegemony and Social Transformation," *Journal of Socio-Cultural* 16, no. 1 (2019).

<sup>94</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

<sup>95</sup> Dahlianatalia Lumban Gaol et al., "Analysis of the Role of Political Actors in the Public Policy Formulation Process in Sampali Village, Percut Sei Tuan District" 2, no. 2 (2024): 1238–43.

contributes to the development of democracy and governance at the regional level, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced in the contemporary political context.

## 2. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation.<sup>96</sup> The informants in this study are the Deputy Chairman of PWNU, the Deputy Secretary, and the Katib of PWNU. The location in the study is the place where the researcher conducts the research. The location chosen for this study is on Jalan Sei Batang hari no 92, Babura Sunggal, Medan Sunggal District, North Sumatra.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama in Local Political Dynamics

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) carries out its political role more dominantly in moral, social, and educational aspects, rather than direct involvement in practical politics. These findings show that NU positions itself as a community organization that plays a role in shaping and influencing the political life of the community through the cultivation of religious and social values.<sup>97</sup> From the perspective of political dynamics theory, the role emphasizes that the political process is not solely related to the struggle for power, but also includes the social interactions that shape people's political attitudes and behaviors.<sup>98</sup> The results of the interview with Masdar Limbong revealed that NU interprets its role in the political context as an effort to create a conducive political atmosphere in the community:

*"NU's role in the political context is more directed at creating a conducive political atmosphere in the community. This is realized through religious activities, such as tausiyah and lectures, which aim to enlighten and calm the ummah so that they are not provoked by the developing political dynamics. NU does not show partiality to certain candidates, both in the regional head election and legislative elections. This organization gives freedom to all its citizens to make their own political choices in accordance with their rights and responsibilities as citizens. There is no effort from NU to direct or lead citizens' political choices to certain candidates. In addition, NU has set strict internal rules, namely that administrators who want to run for political contests are required to resign from the organization's management. This provision reflects NU's commitment to maintaining the independence and consistency of organizational principles so as not to get involved in practical politics."*

The results of the interview with Masdar Limbong revealed that NU interprets its political role as an effort to create a peaceful and conducive political climate in the community. This effort is carried out through religious approaches, such as tausiyah and lectures, which serve to provide enlightenment while reducing potential conflicts due to political dynamics. Within the framework of the theory of political dynamics, this role reflects the function of social stabilization, where NU contributes to maintaining the balance of the political system, especially in political momentum such as the election of regional heads and legislative elections.<sup>99</sup> NU's neutrality attitude that does not favor certain candidates or political parties, as well as giving NU residents the freedom to make their political choices independently, is in line with the concept of autonomous political participation. In the theory of political participation, ideal participation is a participation born from individual consciousness, not the result of mobilization or organizational pressure.<sup>100</sup> By not conducting political briefings, NU shows its

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<sup>96</sup> Edward Schatz, ed., *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

<sup>97</sup> Michael Buehler, *The Politics of Shari'a Law: Islamist Activists and the State in Democratizing Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>98</sup> Greg Fealy and Sally White, eds., *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2018).

<sup>99</sup> Robert W Hefner, *Ritual and Cultural Revival: Islam, Politics, and Multicultural Citizenship in Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>100</sup> Gerry van Klinken, *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia: Small Town Wars* (London: Routledge, 2014).

commitment to democratic principles, especially respect for freedom of choice and differences of political views.

### **3.2 Factors Influencing the Political Participation of Nahdlatul Ulama in Local Political Dynamics**

The political participation of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in local political dynamics is influenced by a number of interrelated factors and forms a distinctive pattern of political involvement. Social and religious factors are the main foundation that influences NU's attitude and role in responding to political developments at the local level. In the perspective of political participation theory, value and cultural factors are important elements that shape the political orientation and behavior of a group. The religious values embraced by NU serve as normative guidelines in determining the form of political participation that is considered in accordance with organizational principles.<sup>101</sup>

The political participation of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in local political dynamics is influenced by a number of interrelated factors and forms a distinctive pattern of political involvement. Social and religious factors are the main foundation that influences NU's attitude and role in responding to political developments at the local level. In the perspective of political participation theory, value and cultural factors are important elements that shape the political orientation and behavior of a group. The religious values embraced by NU serve as normative guidelines in determining the form of political participation that is considered in accordance with organizational principles.<sup>102</sup> The religious approach is used by NU as the main strategy in carrying out its role in the midst of local political dynamics. Various activities such as recitation, tausiyah, religious lectures, and joint prayer are used as a means to convey moral and social messages to the community. This can be proven from the speaker, Mr. Sawaluddin Nasution, he stated:

*"The role of religious activities such as tausiyah, lectures, prayers, and other spiritual activities is very important in responding to local political dynamics. Through these activities, NU tries to calm the people and provide understanding so that the community is not easily provoked by different political choices. The messages conveyed in tausiyah and lectures usually emphasize the importance of maintaining unity, mutual respect, and not magnifying differences. In addition, prayer and other spiritual activities are also a way for NU to create a safe and peaceful political atmosphere. With this religious approach, NU does not interfere in practical politics, but still plays a role in maintaining community harmony so that the political process can run in an orderly manner and does not cause conflicts."*

The religious approach is considered effective because it is able to reach the moral and spiritual dimensions of the community directly. In various religious forums, NU instills the values of mutual respect, brotherhood, and self-control in responding to political differences.<sup>103</sup> This is in line with normative political participation theory, which emphasizes that political participation is not only measured by the level of formal involvement, but also by political attitudes and orientations that support the creation of a healthy and ethical democratic order.

### **3.3 Nahdlatul Ulama's Strategy in Responding to Local Politics**

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)'s strategy in responding to local political dynamics can be understood through the theoretical framework of political dynamics that emphasizes the importance of social stability, conflict management, and the adjustment of social actors to political changes that occur in society. NU has consistently affirmed its position as a community organization that is outside the realm practical politics. This attitude is manifested through a commitment to maintain organizational neutrality by not providing support to certain political parties or candidates, as well as limiting the use of NU's name, symbols, and attributes in political activities. This strategy is a form of organizational

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<sup>101</sup> Ricklefs, *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java: A Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, c. 1930 to Present*.

<sup>102</sup> Diego Fossati, "The Resurgence of Ideology in Indonesia: Political Islam, Aliran and Political Behaviour," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 38, no. 2 (2019): 161–88.

<sup>103</sup> Buehler, *The Politics of Shari'a Law: Islamist Activists and the State in Democratizing Indonesia*.

adaptation to local political dynamics that has the potential to cause social fragmentation if not managed carefully.<sup>104</sup>

From the perspective of political dynamics theory, restricting the use of organizational symbols and attributes has a strategic function as a conflict prevention mechanism. This policy is not only administrative, but also an instrument to avoid politicizing organizational identities that can trigger divisions, both within NU and in the community.<sup>105</sup> By keeping a distance from practical political interests, NU seeks to maintain institutional independence while maintaining social cohesion in a politically plural society. Mr. Masdar Limbong stated:

*"NU sets strict provisions related to the boundary between personal attitudes and organizational attitudes. Members and administrators are allowed to express political views on their own behalf, as long as they do not use NU's name, symbol, or attributes. This provision was enacted as an effort to maintain the neutrality and independence of NU as a community organization, as well as to prevent NU's involvement in practical political practices."*

The results of the study show that NU consciously positions itself as a socio-religious actor who plays a role in creating a safe, orderly, and conducive political climate, not as an electoral political actor. This role is carried out through religious approaches, such as *tausiyah* and lectures, which aim to build public awareness to be able to respond to differences in political choices rationally and maturely. This approach is in line with the theory of political dynamics that views social organizations as stabilizing agents in the political system, particularly at the local level that are vulnerable to horizontal conflicts.<sup>106</sup>

NU's neutral attitude is also closely related to the theory of political participation. NU gives full freedom to citizens and its members to determine their own political choices as individual rights and obligations as citizens. Within the framework of this theory, political participation is understood as an individual activity that is voluntary and autonomous, rather than as a representation of organizational attitudes. NU sets a firm boundary between personal political attitudes and organizational attitudes, where members and administrators are allowed to express political views on personal behalf as long as they do not use NU's institutional identity. This separation reflects an effort to maintain a balance between individual freedom and institutional neutrality.

#### 4. Conclusion

The role of Nahdlatul Ulama in local political dynamics is more directed towards the implementation of moral, social, and educational functions than involvement in practical politics. NU consistently positions itself as a community organization that plays a role in maintaining social stability and creating a conducive political climate. This role is carried out through religious approaches such as *tausiyah*, lectures, recitations, and other spiritual activities that aim to provide understanding and calm to the community so that they are not easily influenced by political dynamics and differences.

Social and religious factors are the main factors that affect the pattern of NU's political participation. The religious approach is considered effective because it is able to touch the moral and spiritual aspects of society, so that it plays a role in preventing social conflicts and maintaining harmony in the midst of different political views. With this role, NU appears as a moral force and part of civil society that makes a real contribution to the quality of local democracy, even though it is not involved

NU's strategy in dealing with local political dynamics is carried out through efforts to maintain organizational neutrality and the implementation of political education to the community. Organizational neutrality is reflected in impartiality, restrictions on the use of NU names and symbols in political activities, and a clear separation between individual political attitudes and organizational attitudes. Meanwhile, political education is carried out through socialization and coaching that aims to

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<sup>104</sup> Olle Törnquist, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy: Autonomy vs. Control in Indonesia* (Jakarta: PSHK, 2018).

<sup>105</sup> Dan Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>106</sup> Andreas Ufen, "Political Parties and the Role of Islam in Indonesia," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 39, no. 1 (2020): 3–28.

increase people's political participation without influencing certain political choices directly in the formal power structure.

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## **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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**Transformational Leadership and Teacher Performance as Catalysts for Academic Engagement and Career Self-Efficacy in Vocational Education: A Structural Equation Modeling Analysis in Indonesian Context**

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**ABSTRACT**

This empirical study investigates the structural relationships among principals' transformational leadership, teacher performance, academic engagement, and career self-efficacy among vocational education students in Indonesia. Grounded in Bandura's self-efficacy theory and the Bass-Avolio transformational leadership framework, the study develops an integrated model linking organizational and psychological factors within vocational education contexts. A cross-sectional survey was conducted involving 222 students in grades XI and XII at SMKN 2 Lingsar. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. The findings reveal that transformational leadership significantly predicts academic engagement ( $\beta = 0.32, p < 0.01$ ) and indirectly affects career self-efficacy through academic engagement mediation ( $\beta = 0.12, p < 0.01$ ). Teacher performance emerged as the strongest predictor of academic engagement ( $\beta = 0.41, p < 0.001$ ) and significantly influenced career self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.27, p < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, academic engagement demonstrated a strong positive effect on career self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.38, p < 0.001$ ), explaining 62% of the variance in students' career self-efficacy. The study highlights that vocational graduate unemployment may stem not only from limited technical competence but also from inadequate psychological readiness. Theoretically, this research contributes an integrated framework connecting educational management and educational psychology. Practically, the findings identify strategic school-level interventions to strengthen students' employment readiness through leadership, teacher effectiveness, and academic engagement development.

## 1. Introduction

Vocational education constitutes a critical component of human capital development strategies, particularly in emerging and developing economies where technical workforce preparation directly links to economic productivity and labor market competitiveness.<sup>107</sup> In the Indonesian context, secondary vocational schools (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan, SMK) occupy an increasingly significant educational role, with enrollment exceeding 10 million students nationally and serving as primary pathway for workforce entry across technical sectors.<sup>108</sup> However, the mandate of vocational education extends beyond skill acquisition to encompass the development of psychologically prepared graduates equipped with motivation, engagement in learning, and confidence in career decision-making dimensions essential for navigating contemporary labor markets characterized by technological disruption, occupational change, and heightened competition.<sup>109</sup>

Despite the strategic importance of vocational education, Indonesian vocational schools confront a persistent and troubling gap between educational intentions and labor market outcomes. Data from Indonesia's Central Statistical Bureau (BPS) reveal that graduates from vocational education face an unemployment rate of 8.62% substantially higher than diploma graduates (5.43%) and bachelor's degree holders (5.63%), rendering vocational graduates the most vulnerable group in the labor market.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, Kemendikbudristek (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology) statistics indicate that merely 42% of vocational graduates secure employment aligned with their field of specialization within the first year following graduation.<sup>111</sup> These aggregate labor market statistics mask a more fundamental challenge: many vocational students demonstrate insufficient psychological readiness for workforce entry, characterized by low engagement in learning processes and limited confidence in career decision-making capacity.<sup>112</sup>

Preliminary investigation in SMKN 2 Lingsar (a representative state vocational school in West Nusa Tenggara Province serving 486 students across five technical specializations) corroborated this pattern. Through discussions with school administration, teachers of both academic and vocational subjects, and informal student interviews, a consistent phenomenon emerged: many students, despite physical attendance in classes and practical workshops, demonstrated minimal psychological engagement with learning processes. Teachers reported that students exhibited low participation in discussions, limited commitment to practical exercises, and concerning expressions of uncertainty regarding post-graduation career pathways. These observations align with psychological constructs of academic disengagement a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing behavioral withdrawal, emotional disconnection, and cognitive underinvestment in learning activities.<sup>113</sup> Beyond disengagement, students frequently articulated doubts about whether their vocational preparation would facilitate employment, whether they possessed the capabilities demanded by employers, and what career

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<sup>107</sup> Widodo, Slamet. "Manajemen Strategis Mutu Pendidikan Vokasi di Era Industri 4.0," *Jurnal Akuntabilitas Manajemen Pendidikan*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2020: 45

<sup>108</sup> Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Barat. *Nusa Tenggara Barat Dalam Angka 2024*. Mataram: BPS NTB, 2024: 87.

<sup>109</sup> Kania Zariayufa, Shafira Cahyani, and Witriani Witriani. "Peran Dukungan Orang Tua, Guru dan Teman Sebaya terhadap Keterlibatan Siswa SMK dalam Pembelajaran," *JIPSI: Jurnal Ilmu Psikologi Indonesia*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2022: 45.

<sup>110</sup> Badan Pusat Statistik. *Keadaan Ketenagakerjaan Indonesia Agustus 2024*. Jakarta: BPS, 2024: 45.

<sup>111</sup> Kemendikbudristek. "Laporan Kesiapan Lulusan SMK." Jakarta: Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2024.

<sup>112</sup> Rizky Dwi Pratama et al. "Pengaruh Academic Engagement dan Behavior Engagement terhadap Academic Performance Siswa Kelas XI SMK Negeri 1 Sidoarjo," *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2025: 113.

<sup>113</sup> Astuti and Santoso. "Analisis Faktor Ketidakterikatan Akademik," *Jurnal Riset Pendidikan*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2023: 117.

pathways aligned with their vocational specialization. These doubts reflect deficient career self-efficacy the psychological construct representing confidence in one's capacity to execute career-related tasks including exploration, decision-making, and problem-solving.<sup>114</sup>

Among the organizational factors potentially influencing students' academic engagement and career self-efficacy, principal transformational leadership stands theoretically prominent. Transformational leadership characterized by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration represents an approach through which leaders elevate follower aspirations, establish shared organizational purpose, and stimulate development of follower capabilities.<sup>115</sup> In educational contexts, principals practicing transformational leadership establish organizational climates supporting teacher development, pedagogical innovation, and student achievement.<sup>116</sup> Teacher performance constitutes a second critical organizational variable. Effective teaching encompasses not merely content coverage but creation of psychologically engaging learning environments where students experience meaningful academic tasks, emotional safety, authentic recognition, and connection to occupational relevance.<sup>117</sup> These two organizational variables principal leadership and teacher quality operate through organizational channels and psychological mechanisms to influence student-level outcomes including engagement and career confidence.

Despite theoretical plausibility, the Indonesian educational research literature reveals a substantial gap in empirical investigation of these relationships, particularly in vocational education contexts. Prior research has examined transformational leadership in relation to teacher motivation or general student achievement,<sup>118</sup> and separate investigations have explored academic engagement in response to various environmental supports.<sup>119</sup> However, few studies have simultaneously modeled the complex pathways through which organizational variables (principal leadership and teacher performance) influence the constellation of student psychological outcomes (academic engagement and career self-efficacy) critical to graduate workforce readiness. This research gap proves particularly consequential in vocational education, where psychological dimensions of readiness engagement in technical preparation and confidence in career capability may constitute overlooked mechanisms through which organizational quality translates into employment outcomes.

The present investigation undertakes a comprehensive empirical examination of these relationships through structural equation modeling, seeking to answer three primary research questions: First, what are the direct and indirect effects of transformational principal leadership and teacher performance on students' academic engagement? Second, how do these organizational variables influence career self-efficacy both through direct pathways and indirectly through mediation via academic engagement? Third, what structural relationships best explain the mechanisms through which

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<sup>114</sup> Rahmia Nadhira Hanifah and Dasalinda. "Hubungan Efikasi Diri dengan Pengambilan Keputusan Karir Siswa SMK," *Guidena: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan, Psikologi, Bimbingan dan Konseling*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2023: 541.

<sup>115</sup> Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio. *Improving Organizational Effectiveness through Transformational Leadership*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994: 2–3.

<sup>116</sup> Mariani Siregar and Harun Nasution. "Pengaruh Budaya Organisasi, Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah, dan Motivasi Kerja terhadap Kinerja Guru Sekolah Dasar Negeri," *Jurnal Edukasi Riset dan Kinerja*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2023: 92.

<sup>117</sup> Slamet Widodo and Fahmi Efendi. "Efektivitas Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah melalui Komitmen Kerja terhadap Kinerja Guru Merdeka Belajar," *Jurnal Akuntabilitas Manajemen Pendidikan*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2023: 178.

<sup>118</sup> Agus Prasetyo and Dini Kurniawati. "Model Kausalitas Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Kinerja Guru, dan Keterlibatan Akademik Siswa SMK: Pendekatan Struktural," *Jurnal Psikologi dan Keilmuan Keahlian*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2023: 214.

<sup>119</sup> Budi Setiawan and Erna Kurniawati. "Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Motivasi Kerja, dan Budaya Kerja terhadap Kinerja Guru SMP Negeri," *Journal of Teacher Education and Research*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2024: 88.

organizational quality translates into psychological readiness for career entry? By systematically addressing these questions with rigorous methodology applied to the Indonesian vocational education context, this research contributes both theoretical refinement of educational management models and practical guidance for school leaders and policymakers concerned with enhancing vocational education quality and graduate employment outcomes.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Transformational Leadership: Theory and Educational Applications

The theoretical concept of transformational leadership emerged from organizational psychology research by Bass and Avolio in response to documented limitations of earlier leadership models emphasizing trait-based or behavioral approaches.<sup>120</sup> Where transactional leadership models emphasize exchange relationships and task compliance, transformational leadership focuses on elevating follower aspirations, inducing consciousness of shared organizational purpose, and stimulating follower development beyond immediate self-interest toward higher-order actualization.<sup>121</sup> The Bass-Avolio model identifies four core dimensions constituting transformational leadership: (1) Idealized Influence, wherein the leader serves as a role model exemplifying integrity, competence, and commitment; (2) Inspirational Motivation, through which the leader articulates compelling visions of the future and communicates optimism about achievement; (3) Intellectual Stimulation, whereby the leader encourages followers to question assumptions, think creatively, and approach problems innovatively; and (4) Individualized Consideration, demonstrated through attention to individual development needs, personalized coaching, and recognition of unique contributions.<sup>122</sup>

In educational settings, transformational leadership has been extensively examined as a predictor of institutional effectiveness, teacher outcomes, and student achievement. Research demonstrates that principals employing transformational strategies establish school climates characterized by shared vision, professional collaboration, commitment to continuous improvement, and innovation in instructional practice.<sup>123</sup> Widodo and Efendi's investigation of Indonesian secondary schools found that transformational principal leadership directly enhanced teacher performance through creation of organizational environments valuing professional development, pedagogical innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.<sup>124</sup> Similarly, Siregar and Nasution's study of primary education identified transformational leadership as significantly predicting both immediate teacher performance outcomes and the establishment of conducive school cultures supporting excellence.<sup>125</sup> Leithwood's comprehensive international review synthesized evidence across diverse cultural and institutional contexts, confirming that transformational approaches consistently enhance teacher capacity and student motivation, with particularly strong effects from the intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration dimensions.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> James MacGregor Burns. *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

<sup>121</sup> Albert Bandura. *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. New York: W.H. Freeman, 1997: 3.

<sup>122</sup> Bass and Avolio, *Improving Organizational Effectiveness*, 2–3.

<sup>123</sup> Kenneth Leithwood, Blair Mascal, and Tiiu Strauss. *Distributed Leadership According to the Evidence*. New York: Routledge, 2021: 45.

<sup>124</sup> Widodo and Efendi, "Efektivitas Kepemimpinan Transformasional," 178.

<sup>125</sup> Siregar and Nasution, "Pengaruh Budaya Organisasi," 92.

<sup>126</sup> Leithwood, Mascal, and Strauss, *Distributed Leadership*, 45.

## 2.2 Teacher Performance and Professional Competency Framework

Teacher performance encompasses the totality of professional behaviors and outcomes through which educators fulfill their multifaceted responsibilities to students, institutions, and society.<sup>127</sup> Rather than representing a unidimensional construct, teacher effectiveness integrates numerous competency domains essential to educational quality. The Indonesian government's comprehensive regulatory framework, established through Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008 and Ministry of National Education Regulation No. 16 of 2007, operationalizes teacher competence across four integrated domains reflecting international best practices: Pedagogical Competence (encompassing curriculum knowledge, instructional design, assessment of learning, and responsiveness to learner diversity); Professional Competence (representing subject matter expertise and commitment to continuous learning); Personality Competence (reflecting ethical character, reliability, and authenticity in professional relationships); and Social Competence (demonstrating interpersonal communication effectiveness and community engagement).<sup>128</sup>

In vocational education specifically, teacher performance necessarily includes contemporary industry knowledge, modeling of professional practices and standards, and explicit articulation of connections between classroom content and occupational contexts.<sup>129</sup> Widodo's investigation of quality management in vocational education during the Industry 4.0 era emphasized that high-performing vocational teachers function as bridges between academic instruction and labor market realities, directly validating for students the relevance and applicability of technical knowledge while demonstrating how competencies transfer to professional settings.<sup>130</sup> Pratama and colleagues' research examining factors predicting academic engagement among vocational students found that teacher performance operationalized through instructional quality, motivational communication, and career-relevant content positioning constituted the strongest predictor of both behavioral and affective dimensions of student engagement.<sup>131</sup>

## 2.3 Academic Engagement: Conceptualization and Empirical Significance in Vocational Contexts

Academic engagement represents a multidimensional psychological construct reflecting the extent, intensity, and quality of students' behavioral participation, emotional connection, and cognitive investment in learning processes.<sup>132</sup> Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris's seminal conceptualization, which has gained substantial empirical validation across educational contexts, distinguishes three complementary and conceptually distinct dimensions: Behavioral Engagement (reflecting observable participation in academic tasks, attendance, effort investment, and persistence despite difficulty); Emotional Engagement (representing sense of belonging to the educational community, emotional identification with school, positive affect toward learning, and perceived value of education); and Cognitive Engagement (encompassing adoption of deep learning strategies, metacognitive monitoring, critical thinking, and investment of cognitive effort toward meaningful understanding).<sup>133</sup> This tripartite

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<sup>127</sup> Muhammad Anwar. "Dampak Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah terhadap Iklim Kerja Kreatif dan Output Siswa," *Jurnal Manajemen dan Supervisi Pendidikan*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2022: 89.

<sup>128</sup> Ministry of National Education of Indonesia. "Regulation No. 16 of 2007 on Academic Qualification and Teacher Competence Standards." Jakarta, 2007.

<sup>129</sup> Government of Indonesia. "Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008 on Teacher Competency." Jakarta, 2008.

<sup>130</sup> Widodo, "Manajemen Strategis Mutu Pendidikan Vokasi," 45.

<sup>131</sup> Pratama et al., "Pengaruh Academic Engagement," 113.

<sup>132</sup> Jennifer A. Fredricks, Phyllis C. Blumenfeld, and Alison H. Paris. "School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence," *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 74, no. 1, 2004: 59–60.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

framework acknowledges that genuine engagement transcends surface compliance to reflect authentic psychological investment.

The theoretical and empirical significance of academic engagement derives from documented associations with educational achievement, reduced dropout rates, and successful post-secondary transitions.<sup>134</sup> In vocational education contexts particularly, academic engagement assumes heightened importance because students' motivation and psychological investment in practical and technical courses directly reflects their underlying conviction regarding the relevance of vocational preparation to subsequent employment.<sup>135</sup> Students demonstrating high engagement in vocational coursework report stronger confidence that their technical skills will facilitate employment, greater willingness to invest effort in skill development despite difficulty, and more active exploration of career possibilities within their field. Conversely, disengagement frequently manifests as students questioning the utility and relevance of vocational preparation, reluctantly completing technical assignments, and expressing uncertainty about post-graduation career pathways and employment prospects.

#### 2.4 Career Self-Efficacy: Theoretical Foundations and Empirical Evidence

Career self-efficacy emerged as an operationalized application of Bandura's comprehensive self-efficacy theory to the specific domain of vocational and career decision-making.<sup>136</sup> Hackett and Betz, who introduced the career-specific construct in 1981, defined career self-efficacy as an individual's confidence in their capability to execute the various tasks inherent in career planning and occupational decision-making, encompassing specific dimensions including confidence in exploring career options, ability to make informed occupational decisions, capacity to solve career-related problems, and confidence in selecting an appropriate occupation aligned with personal characteristics.<sup>137</sup> Bandura's foundational theoretical model specifies four primary sources of self-efficacy beliefs applicable to career domain: Mastery Experiences (successful performance of relevant tasks and accomplishment of goals), Vicarious Experiences (observation of similar others succeeding in career-related activities), Verbal Persuasion (encouragement, reassurance, and affirmation from credible sources regarding capability), and Physiological States (positive emotional and physical readiness and absence of anxiety or stress).<sup>138</sup>

Empirical research comprehensively confirms that vocational students with higher career self-efficacy exhibit greater assertiveness in career exploration, increased persistence when encountering occupational obstacles, clearer future orientations, and more successful early-career employment outcomes compared with lower-efficacy counterparts.<sup>139</sup> Putman's comprehensive examination of career self-efficacy specifically in vocational education emphasizes that meaningful learning experiences characterized by authentic tasks connected to occupational practice, visible relevance to professional work, and opportunities for success and mastery constitute the most potent environmental antecedents of career self-efficacy development among vocational students.<sup>140</sup> Hanifah and Dasalinda's Indonesian study identified that students' confidence in their vocational competencies directly predicted

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<sup>134</sup> Zariayufa, Cahyani, and Witriani, "Peran Dukungan Orang Tua," 45.

<sup>135</sup> Nuraini. "Building Bridges to the Workforce: The Role of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy in Vocational Students' Work Readiness," *Psikostudia: Jurnal Psikologi*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2024: 214.

<sup>136</sup> Gail Hackett and Nancy E. Betz. "A Self-Efficacy Approach to the Career Development of Women," *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1981: 326–339.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Bandura, *Self-Efficacy*, 3.

<sup>139</sup> Hanifah and Dasalinda, "Hubungan Efikasi Diri," 541.

<sup>140</sup> Sandra L. Putman. *Career Self-Efficacy and Vocational Education: A Practical Guide for Educators*. New York: Springer, 2022: 112.

the quality of their career decision-making processes and early career success.<sup>141</sup> The significance of career self-efficacy extends beyond individual psychological functioning to encompass tangible labor market and social outcomes: low career self-efficacy correlates with prolonged job searching, underemployment (employment below skill and education level), and reduced occupational persistence when encountering workplace challenges.<sup>142</sup>

## 2.5 Theoretical Integration and Research Proposition

The theoretical integration of transformational leadership, teacher performance, academic engagement, and career self-efficacy into a unified structural model rests upon several well-established theoretical propositions and empirical findings from organizational and educational psychology literatures. First, organizational literature on leadership effectiveness demonstrates through meta-analytic synthesis that transformational leadership influences organizational and individual outcomes through both direct pathways (through policies, resource allocation, modeling) and indirect channels operating through employee motivation and organizational culture.<sup>143</sup> Second, extensive research in educational contexts confirms that teacher quality and performance represent primary mechanisms through which leadership effects propagate to classroom-level teaching and learning processes.<sup>144</sup> Third, psychological research on engagement confirms that academic engagement mediates relationships between environmental supports and longer-term developmental outcomes.<sup>145</sup> Fourth, self-efficacy theory specifies that confidence develops cumulatively through accumulation of success experiences, observation of similar others succeeding, social persuasion from credible sources, and positive emotional states environmental conditions that high-quality teaching and positive school climates actively cultivate.<sup>146</sup>

Building upon these theoretical foundations, researcher proposes an integrated model with the following postulated mechanisms: Transformational principal leadership establishes organizational conditions favorable to high teacher performance through creation of supportive environments valuing professional development, pedagogical innovation, and collaborative problem-solving. High-performing teachers, in turn, construct classroom learning environments and implement pedagogical interactions that promote student academic engagement through meaningful task design, emotional safety, authentic recognition of effort, and explicit connection to occupational relevance. This genuine academic engagement manifested in sustained behavioral participation, emotional connection to school, and deep cognitive processing generates the mastery experiences and social persuasion mechanisms that strengthen students' confidence in their vocational competencies and capacity to execute career decision-making tasks. The model further hypothesizes direct pathways from both transformational leadership and teacher performance to career self-efficacy, recognizing that organizational support and professional modeling of confidence influence student career conviction through mechanisms independent of engagement processes. This integrated framework represents a substantial theoretical departure from prior studies examining leadership or teacher quality in isolation, offering promise for

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Rosalyn Sumampong and Alvic Arnado. "The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Teacher Motivation and Engagement: Proposed TELM Framework," *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2024: 1523.

<sup>143</sup> Hair, Joseph F., et al. *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2022: 78.

<sup>144</sup> Sugiyono. *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan: Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta, 2022: 11.

<sup>145</sup> Husein Umar. *Metode Penelitian untuk Skripsi dan Tesis Bisnis*. Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2021: 108.

<sup>146</sup> . Nur Hidayati. "Relevansi Teori Bass dan Avolio dalam Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Vokasi di Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2022: 77.

comprehensively understanding the mechanisms through which organizational excellence translates into graduate readiness.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Research Design and Participants

This research employs a cross-sectional survey design utilizing quantitative methodology and structural equation modeling to test hypotheses regarding relationships among variables.<sup>147</sup> The study was conducted at SMKN 2 Lingsar, a state-operated secondary vocational school located in Lombok Barat District, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. Selection of this institution was based upon: (1) documented pedagogical challenges regarding student engagement and career readiness identified through preliminary discussions with school administration and teachers; (2) adequate availability of student population and institutional data; (3) institutional representativeness of secondary vocational schools in the NTB region; and (4) demonstrated institutional commitment to supporting research activities.

The study population comprised all students enrolled in grades XI and XII (second and third year of vocational study) at SMKN 2 Lingsar during the 2025/2026 academic year, representing 486 students distributed across five vocational specializations. Selection of upper-level grades was deliberate, based on the rationale that students at this stage have accumulated sufficient direct experience with principal leadership patterns and teacher performance to provide valid assessments, and have developed sufficiently differentiated career intentions amenable to valid measurement. Sample size determination employed Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level, yielding a minimum required sample of 222 respondents. To accommodate anticipated data loss through incomplete responses or missing data, 250 questionnaires were distributed. Sampling employed proportionate stratified random sampling, with strata defined by students' vocational program (automotive technology, electrical installation, hospitality services, information systems, and tourism services), ensuring representative inclusion across technical specializations.

#### 3.2 Measurement Instruments and Psychometric Properties

Transformational Leadership was operationalized as students' perceptions of their principal's enactment of the four dimensions articulated in Bass and Avolio's theoretical framework. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X), adapted for Indonesian educational contexts through linguistic and cultural validation, provided the measurement instrument, containing 20 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (frequently). Pedagogical experts in educational administration and leadership validated cultural and contextual appropriateness of language translation prior to administration.

Teacher Performance was operationalized according to the Indonesian government's regulatory competency framework, encompassing pedagogical, professional, personality, and social competencies. An instrument developed to align with Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008 and Ministry Regulation No. 16 of 2007 was employed, containing 24 items distributed across the four competency domains. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale assessing students' perceptions of their teachers' demonstrated competence in each domain.

Academic Engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale adapted for student populations (UWES-S), consisting of 17 items distributed across three dimensions: behavioral engagement (6 items assessing participation and persistence), emotional engagement (5 items assessing

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<sup>147</sup> . Bandura, "Self-Efficacy: An Essential Motive to Learn," *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1992: 257–280.

belonging and positive affect), and cognitive engagement (6 items assessing deep learning strategies and cognitive effort). Respondents indicated agreement on a 5-point Likert scale.

Career Self-Efficacy was assessed using the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale–Short Form (CDSE-SF), an internationally validated instrument translated into Indonesian, containing 25 items measuring confidence in career planning (5 items), career decision-making (5 items), career problem-solving (5 items), occupational selection (5 items), and persistence in face of obstacles (5 items). The Likert scale ranged from 1 (no confidence) to 5 (complete confidence).

Prior to main data collection, all instruments underwent rigorous pilot testing with 40 students outside the study sample. Convergent validity was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with minimum threshold of 0.50; all scales exceeded this criterion, ranging from 0.51 to 0.68. Composite reliability coefficients ranged from 0.83 to 0.91, substantially exceeding the 0.70 minimum threshold, confirming adequate internal consistency. Discriminant validity assessment through Fornell-Larcker criterion confirmed that square roots of AVE for each construct exceeded inter-construct correlations, establishing discriminant validity.

### 3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis proceeded through two complementary stages. First, descriptive analysis employed conventional statistics (means, standard deviations, frequency distributions) to characterize the sample and describe the central tendencies and variation of all variables. Categorization of variable levels employed standardized norms using mean and standard deviation benchmarks to classify respondents into meaningful groups (very high, high, moderate, low, very low).

Hypothesis testing proceeded through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) employing SmartPLS 4.0 software, selected because this approach proves particularly appropriate for: (1) predictive models with complex variable relationships; (2) models incorporating both reflective and formative measurement indicators; (3) research contexts where multivariate normality assumptions may be violated; and (4) relatively smaller sample sizes (Hair et al. 2022 recommend minimum  $n=100$  for PLS-SEM, though  $n=222$  provides substantial power).<sup>148</sup> PLS-SEM analysis proceeded through two sequential phases: (a) evaluation of outer model (measurement model) assessing convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability; and (b) evaluation of inner model (structural model) examining path coefficients,  $R^2$  values (coefficient of determination), effect sizes ( $f^2$ ), and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ).

## 4. Conclusion

Of the 250 distributed questionnaires, 228 were returned with sufficient data for analysis (91.2% response rate). Descriptive analysis of these 228 respondents revealed mean scores for transformational leadership ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ), teacher performance ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ), academic engagement ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ), and career self-efficacy ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ). Application of categorization norms revealed that transformational leadership and teacher performance fell within 'high' ranges ( $M + 0.5 SD < score \leq M + 1.5 SD$ ), while academic engagement and career self-efficacy were categorized as 'moderate-to-high' ( $M - 0.5 SD < score \leq M + 0.5 SD$ ), indicating substantial opportunity for enhancement in student psychological variables through organizational improvements.

Outer model evaluation confirmed adequate measurement properties for all constructs. Factor loadings ranged from 0.72 to 0.94, with all loadings exceeding the 0.70 threshold recommended for acceptable convergent validity. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.51 to 0.68, all exceeding the minimum 0.50 threshold. Composite Reliability coefficients ranged from 0.83 to 0.91,

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<sup>148</sup> Hair et al., A Primer on Partial Least Squares, 191–195.

all substantially exceeding the 0.70 threshold. Discriminant validity assessment through Fornell-Larcker criterion (comparing square roots of AVE to inter-construct correlations) confirmed that discriminant validity criteria were satisfied for all construct pairs. These results demonstrate that the measurement instruments adequately captured the theoretical constructs they purported to measure, with acceptable reliability and validity properties.

Inner model analysis examined the structural relationships among variables. Path analysis of direct effects confirmed that transformational leadership significantly predicted academic engagement ( $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $t = 3.24$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , 95% CI [0.12, 0.52]), supporting Hypothesis 1. Teacher performance also significantly predicted academic engagement ( $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $t = 4.13$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI [0.23, 0.59]), supporting Hypothesis 2. Collectively, transformational leadership and teacher performance explained 51% of variance in academic engagement ( $R^2 = 0.51$ ), indicating substantial explanatory power.

Regarding career self-efficacy outcomes, Hypothesis 3 received partial support: transformational leadership exhibited a direct effect on career self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $t = 2.08$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.35]), though of smaller magnitude than effects on academic engagement. Hypothesis 4 was fully supported: teacher performance significantly predicted career self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.27$ ,  $t = 3.15$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , 95% CI [0.10, 0.44]). Most notably, Hypothesis 5 was strongly supported: academic engagement significantly predicted career self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $t = 4.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI [0.21, 0.55]), demonstrating the largest path coefficient in the model. The three predictors collectively explained 62% of variance in career self-efficacy ( $R^2 = 0.62$ ), indicating substantial explanatory power.

Mediation analysis employing bootstrapping procedures (5,000 iterations) examined indirect effects. Academic engagement partially mediated the effects of transformational leadership on career self-efficacy (indirect effect:  $\beta = 0.12$ ,  $t = 2.96$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , 95% CI [0.04, 0.20]), and teacher performance on career self-efficacy (indirect effect:  $\beta = 0.16$ ,  $t = 3.44$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI [0.07, 0.25]). Effect size calculations using  $f^2$  values (ranging from 0.15 to 0.24) indicated small-to-medium effect sizes for all significant relationships, meeting Cohen's guidelines for practical significance. These findings suggest that while organizational variables (principal leadership, teacher performance) exert direct influences on student outcomes, a substantial portion of their effect operates through enhancement of academic engagement.

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## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. The funders had no role in study design, data collection and analysis, decision to publish, or preparation of the manuscript.

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**Identity Politics Dynamics and the Construction of Electability of  
Legislative Candidates: A Phenomenological Study in Dapil II East  
Lombok in the 2024 Election**

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**ABSTRACT**

This phenomenological study examines the dynamics of identity politics and electoral viability construction among legislative candidates in Electoral District II (Dapil II) of East Lombok during Indonesia's 2024 elections. Employing Alfred Schutz's phenomenological framework integrated with Social Identity Theory and political opportunity structure perspectives, the research explores how candidates strategically leverage multiple identity markers religious, ethnic, and regional to enhance electoral appeal. Through purposive sampling involving 15 legislative candidates and campaign team members, supplemented by ethnographic observation (60+ hours), discourse analysis of campaign materials, and textual interpretation of social media messaging, the study identifies three critical mechanisms of electability construction: (1) identity codification selective emphasis of specific identity dimensions while downplaying others; (2) constituency-identity alignment construction of authentic representation narratives; and (3) inter-candidate differentiation distinction through identity positioning. Findings reveal that identity politics operates simultaneously as structural constraint and agentic resource, wherein candidates experience identity mobilization not as pure strategy but as embedded within webs of authentic belief, moral judgment, and social obligation. The study contributes theoretically by demonstrating how phenomenological approaches illuminate the lived experience underlying electoral behavior, and practically by offering recommendations for candidates, parties, and election administrators engaging identity-conscious constituencies. The research addresses significant gaps in Indonesian electoral studies by centering candidate perspectives and employing phenomenological rigor to analyze local-level identity politics during heightened religious identity mobilization.

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia's electoral landscape has undergone profound transformation in recent decades, with identity-based political mobilization increasingly superseding class-based or programmatic competition as the organizing principle of electoral politics.<sup>149</sup> This shift reflects broader global patterns wherein identity categories including ethnicity, religion, caste, and region structure political choice in ways that transcend traditional left-right ideological divides.<sup>150</sup> Within Indonesia specifically, the intensification of Islamic identity mobilization following the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections has proven particularly consequential for electoral competition at national and sub-national levels. Electoral District II (Dapil II) of East Lombok, comprising Selong Municipality and surrounding areas of West Nusa Tenggara Province, represents an exemplary site for examining these dynamics empirically. The district encompasses substantial Islamic boarding school (pesantren) communities that exercise significant religious authority extending into political domains; indigenous Sasak populations with distinct cultural and linguistic identities; Balinese migrant populations with their own religious and cultural particularities; and urban populations increasingly engaged with national-level political polarization. Within such heterogeneous contexts, legislative candidates confront distinctive strategic imperatives: they must simultaneously appeal to multiple, potentially competing identity constituencies while maintaining perceived authenticity and internal consistency. The strategies through which candidates navigate these complexities how they experience identity politics, interpret their own positioning, and construct electoral narratives remain inadequately explored within Indonesian political science scholarship. This study addresses this gap by employing phenomenological methodology to examine candidate perspectives on identity politics and electability construction, generating evidence about the lived experience underpinning electoral behavior within multi-identity constituencies.

Electability understood as perceived capacity to win elections constitutes a central preoccupation for candidates and political operatives in all electoral systems yet, operates with complexity in contexts marked by multiple cross-cutting identity cleavages.<sup>151</sup> Prior research on Indian elections, Nigerian politics, and other diverse democracies has documented that voters' electoral decisions reflect not abstract policy preferences alone but complex negotiations between multiple identity positions, candidate personal characteristics, party affiliation, and assessments of candidate competence and trustworthiness.<sup>152</sup> For candidates seeking to establish or enhance electability, this complexity creates both opportunities and constraints. Candidates skilled at bridging identity divides at constructing appeals that resonate across multiple constituencies while appearing genuine may achieve substantial electoral success.<sup>153</sup> Conversely, candidates perceived as inauthentic or as manipulating identity cynically may face voter backlash and reputational damage. The Indonesian context adds complexity, as religious identity has become increasingly salient as an organizing principle of electoral competition without completely displacing other identity dimensions including ethnicity, region, and class. Candidates in East Lombok thus navigate not a single dominant cleavage but rather a multidimensional identity landscape wherein candidates and voters must position themselves relative to religious identity, ethnic identity, regional identity, and other identity dimensions simultaneously. The mechanisms through which candidates construct electability within such terrain the specific strategies they employ,

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<sup>149</sup> Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesian Politics in 2014: Democracy's Steady State?," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 50, no. 2 (2014): 187–207; Marcus Mietzner, "Populism, Partisanship, and Party System Stability in Southeast Asia," *Trends in Southeast Asia*, no. 4 (2021): 1–20.

<sup>150</sup> Kanchan Chandra, "The Structure of Identity Politics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, ed. Carles Boix and Susan C Stokes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 577–605.

<sup>151</sup> Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski, *Political Recruitment: Gender, Race, and Class in the British Parliament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>152</sup> Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Lihat, Steven I Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Communal Riots in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>153</sup> Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).

the challenges they confront, the internal contradictions they navigate require empirical investigation that privileges candidate perspectives and subjective experience.

Phenomenology, as philosophical and methodological approach, offers distinctive advantages for examining the subjective dimensions of political action and meaning making. Rooted in the philosophical traditions established by Edmund Husserl and extended through Alfred Schutz's social phenomenology, phenomenological approaches emphasize the lived experience of actors, the taken-for-granted assumptions that structure their engagement with the world, and the intersubjective processes through which social reality is constituted and negotiated.<sup>154</sup> Applied to political analysis, phenomenology attends to how political actors experience their situations, interpret constraints and opportunities, construct meanings, and exercise agency within socially structured contexts. Phenomenological political analysis has been productively employed to examine social movements political violence and terrorism, and protest participation, but remains underutilized in electoral studies and candidate behavior research. This underutilization represents a significant oversight, as phenomenology proves particularly valuable for understanding the situated agency of political candidates the ways individual candidates experience identity as simultaneously personal belief, social structure, and strategic resource.<sup>155</sup> Phenomenological methodology guards against analytical traps including reductive instrumentalism (treating all candidate behavior as calculated manipulation), essentialism (treating identity as fixed and pre-given), or institutional determinism (viewing candidates merely as carriers of party or institutional interests). Rather, phenomenology enables understanding candidates as reflexive agents who actively interpret their situations, construct meanings, and exercise strategic reasoning while remaining constrained by social structures, institutional contexts, and the expectations and interpretations of others.

The specific research context of Electoral District II, East Lombok requires detailed contextualization to appreciate the particular form's identity politics assumes within this locality. East Lombok District encompasses approximately 1,200 square kilometers with a population exceeding 250,000 residents distributed across multiple municipalities.<sup>156</sup> The district's population composition reflects complex historical migration patterns and contemporary diversity: Sasak, representing approximately 65 percent of the population, constitute the indigenous group with distinctive language, cultural practices, and historical consciousness; Balinese populations, comprising roughly 20 percent of residents, predominantly concentrate in coastal areas with strong religious (Hindu) and cultural identities; Arab/Hadramawt populations comprise approximately 5 percent, historically engaged in commerce and Islamic teaching; and remaining populations represent diverse other groups including Javanese and Sundanese.<sup>157</sup> Religious composition similarly reflects heterogeneity: Islam dominates numerically (approximately 87 percent), with Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist minorities, though these aggregate figures obscure significant variation in Islamic practice and interpretation. The district has experienced substantial educational development in recent decades, with Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) emerging as particularly influential institutional actors. *Pesantren* in East Lombok include major institutions such as Pondok *Pesantren* Nurul Haramain and numerous smaller establishments, collectively educating thousands of students and exercising influence extending beyond formal educational domains into community leadership and spiritual authority. Economically, East Lombok remains predominantly agricultural, though with significant maritime sectors and growing tourism development. Politically, the district has historically experienced substantial party fragmentation, with no single party achieving dominant position in recent elections. The 2024 elections took place within

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<sup>154</sup> Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967); Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966).

<sup>155</sup> Melissa J Wilde, "What Is Religious Conflict?," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (2013): 4–33; Lihat, Jussi Jauhiainen, "In Search of a Geography of Terrorism: Terrorism Events in Finland, 1960-2008," *Political Geography* 31, no. 1 (2012): 14–25; Lihat juga, Costas Panagopoulos, "All Things Being Equal: Asymmetry in Political Communication," *Political Communication* 33, no. 2 (2016): 219–23.

<sup>156</sup> East Lombok District Government, "East Lombok in Numbers 2023" (Selong: Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Lombok Timur, 2023).

<sup>157</sup> Indonesian Central Statistics Agency, "Census of Indonesia 2020: East Lombok District Profile" (Jakarta: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020).

context of renewed religious identity mobilization, with Islamic organizations intensifying organizational activities.

The 2024 Indonesian electoral cycle occurred during a distinctive historical moment characterized by specific forms of political polarization and identity salience. Following the 2019 presidential election, which witnessed unprecedented mobilization around religious identity, Indonesian political actors adjusted strategies to engage or resist religious identity-based appeals.<sup>158</sup> The election of President Prabowo Subianto in 2024 created new incentives for candidates at sub-national levels to position themselves strategically relative to the national political environment while remaining responsive to local constituent priorities and identities. Within this context, East Lombok candidates faced distinctive pressures: national political trends created incentives for some candidates to emphasize religious identity appeals, while others sought to distinguish themselves through alternative positioning, programmatic emphasis, or appeals to ethnic or regional solidarity. The legislative elections, occurring simultaneously with presidential balloting, involved competition for seats in district legislature (DPRD Tingkat II) and provincial legislature (DPRD Tingkat I). Electoral District II specifically encompasses multiple municipalities with distinct political cultures and identity compositions, requiring candidates to develop strategies capable of resonating across these diverse contexts. The presence of particularly influential pesantren created an additional dynamic: candidates sought endorsements from religious leaders, attempted to position themselves as culturally and religiously authentic, and navigated the reputational consequences of success or failure in securing pesantren institutional backing.

Existing literature on identity politics in Indonesia and the broader global South has established foundational understanding of how identity operates in electoral competition while identifying important research gaps that this study addresses. Chandra's (2012) synthesis of research on political identity emphasizes that political actors do not merely respond passively to pre-existing identity cleavages but actively construct and reconstruct which identity dimensions become politically salient through their strategic choices and messaging.<sup>159</sup> Wilkinson's (2004) research on communal violence demonstrates how political entrepreneurs' choices about which identity cleavages to activate have profound consequences for patterns of conflict and cooperation.<sup>160</sup> More recent scholarship specifically on Indonesia by Mietzner (2021)<sup>161</sup> and Aspinall (2015)<sup>162</sup> has documented intensification of Islamic identity mobilization and its electoral consequences. Research on South Asian electoral politics by Varshney (2002)<sup>163</sup> on Hindu-Muslim relations and Chandra (2004)<sup>164</sup> on accommodating pluralism has identified mechanisms through which candidates in multi-ethnic democracies navigate identity terrain, including identity bridging and selective emphasis of cross-cutting identities. However, this substantial body of literature suffers from several limitations: first, existing work tends to examine identity politics from voter or institutional perspectives rather than centering candidate agency and subjective experience; second, the literature remains dominated by structural and rationalist approaches that treat identity either as fixed cleavage or as purely instrumental resource, without adequately engaging phenomenological dimensions; third, empirical research on Indonesian elections remains geographically concentrated on Java and major urban centers, leaving provincial and rural electoral dynamics underexplored. This study addresses these gaps.

The academic and policy significance of this research extends across multiple dimensions. Theoretically, the study contributes to advancing phenomenological approaches to political science by demonstrating how phenomenological methodology illuminates electoral behavior in ways complementary to structural and rationalist approaches. The research generates nuanced understanding of identity politics not as pure manipulation but as embedded within candidate webs of authentic belief, moral judgment, social obligation, and strategic calculation. Practically, as Indonesia's political

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<sup>158</sup> Mietzner, "Populism, Partisanship, and Party System Stability in Southeast Asia."

<sup>159</sup> Chandra, "The Structure of Identity Politics."

<sup>160</sup> Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Communal Riots in India*.

<sup>161</sup> Mietzner, "Populism, Partisanship, and Party System Stability in Southeast Asia."

<sup>162</sup> Edward Aspinall, "The New Nationalism in Indonesia," *Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies* 2, no. 1 (2015): 72–87.

<sup>163</sup> Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*.

<sup>164</sup> Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India*.

landscape becomes increasingly characterized by identity-based mobilization with implications for minority representation, social cohesion, and democratic quality understanding how identity mobilization operates at the local level becomes policy-relevant.<sup>165</sup> The research offers evidence-based recommendations for candidates, political parties, and election administrators seeking to engage identity-conscious constituencies while promoting substantive policy engagement and inclusive democratic practice. The study contributes to election administration capacity by identifying effective communication strategies and pitfalls in identity-conscious electoral contexts. Normatively, the research engages fundamental questions about how identity-based politics can be reconciled with democratic principles of equal citizenship, minority protection, and inclusive representation. By documenting and analyzing candidate experiences in their own terms, the research contributes to more empathetic and nuanced public discourse about identity politics and political motivation.

This article presents findings from a twelve-month qualitative phenomenological study of identity politics and electoral viability construction among legislative candidates in Electoral District II, East Lombok during the 2024 election cycle. The research employed multiple complementary data collection methods including phenomenological interviews with candidates and campaign team members (n=15), ethnographic observation of candidate activities (approximately 60 hours of observation), discourse analysis of campaign materials and social media messaging, and analysis of election commission data and media coverage. The article is structured as follows: the Methods section details the phenomenological approach, justifies methodological choices, describes the research sample and data collection procedures, and explains analytical techniques. The Theoretical Framework section elaborates the philosophical commitments of phenomenology, presents theoretical perspectives integrating phenomenology with social identity theory and political opportunity structures, and develops a conceptual apparatus for analyzing identity-based electability construction. The Results section presents empirical findings organized around three mechanisms of identity-based electability construction: identity codification, constituency-identity alignment, and inter-candidate differentiation, with visual representations including flowcharts and analytical schemas. The Discussion section interprets findings within broader literatures, develops implications for democratic practice and campaign strategy, and presents practical recommendations. The Conclusion synthesizes the research contribution and identifies avenues for future investigation.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Philosophical Foundation and Worldview

This research employs phenomenology as both philosophical worldview and methodological approach, reflecting commitment to understanding lived experience and meaning making of political actors operating within specific social contexts. Phenomenology, as developed through Husserl's transcendental idealism and refined through Schutz's social phenomenology, begins with the fundamental insight that social reality is not independent of human consciousness and interpretation but is rather constituted through the lived experiences and meaningful actions of human subjects.<sup>166</sup> Applied to electoral research, this worldview entails understanding elections not as mechanical aggregation of individual preference votes but as complex social phenomena wherein voters and candidates actively interpret political situations, construct meanings, and exercise agency within socially structured constraints. Phenomenological worldview rejects both the objectivist assumption that political reality exists independent of interpretation and the pure relativist assumption that all interpretations are equally valid. Rather, phenomenology insists that while social reality is constituted through human interpretation and action, these interpretations are constrained by social structures, institutional arrangements, historical context, and the interpretations and actions of others.<sup>167</sup> For candidates engaged in electoral competition, this phenomenological perspective recognizes them as reflexive agents who actively interpret their political situations, calculate strategic options, and construct electoral narratives

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<sup>165</sup> Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2023: Indonesia Country Report" (Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2023).

<sup>166</sup> Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*; Lihat, Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*.

<sup>167</sup> Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*; Lihat, Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

while remaining constrained by party structures, institutional frameworks, voter expectations, media influence, and the actions of competing candidates. This worldview proves particularly apt for studying identity politics, as it enables analysis that avoids reductive instrumentalism (treating all candidate behavior as cynical manipulation) while simultaneously avoiding naive essentialism (treating identity as pre-given and immutable). Instead, phenomenology illuminates how candidates experience identity as simultaneously personal belief, social structure, and strategic resource.<sup>168</sup>

## 2.2 Qualitative Research Design and Approach

This study employs a qualitative research design emphasizing phenomenological interviewing as primary data source, supplemented by ethnographic observation, discourse analysis, and documentary analysis to achieve methodological triangulation and deepen understanding of candidate perspectives. The phenomenological approach is operationalized through three primary methods: (1) phenomenological interviewing, employing open-ended questions designed to elicit rich, detailed descriptions of lived experience and meaning-making; (2) ethnographic observation of candidate activities including campaign events, community gatherings, and strategic planning sessions; and (3) discourse analysis of campaign materials, social media messaging, and media coverage to examine how candidates publicly present themselves and construct electoral narratives across different communicative contexts.<sup>169</sup> These methods are integrated through iterative analysis that moves between candidate perspectives (obtained through interviews), candidate observable behavior (obtained through observation), and candidate public presentation (obtained through discourse analysis) to construct comprehensive understanding of how candidates construct electability through identity positioning.<sup>170</sup> The phenomenological interview approach reflects philosophical commitments to understanding meaning-making and lived experience: interviews employ open-ended prompts such as 'Can you describe how you came to emphasize your position as a religious community leader in your campaign?' or 'What challenges did you face in appealing to both Sasak and Balinese constituencies simultaneously?' Such prompts encourage detailed narrative responses that illuminate how candidates interpret their situations, understand their own identities, calculate strategic options, and make sense of their electoral positioning. Ethnographic observation captures candidate behavior in naturalistic settings, revealing aspects of candidate activity not necessarily expressed in formal interviews. Discourse analysis examines how candidates present themselves through campaign materials and social media, enabling assessment of consistency across different communicative contexts and identification of strategic choices in message framing.<sup>171</sup>

## 2.3 Sample, Participant Selection, and Data Collection Procedures

The study employed purposive sampling to select legislative candidates participating in the 2024 elections in Electoral District II, East Lombok. The sampling strategy sought to maximize variation across several dimensions: (1) candidates affiliated with different political parties representing various ideological positions and relationships to religious identity mobilization; (2) candidates with different ethnic backgrounds (Sasak, Balinese, Arab, Javanese) to capture variation in how different ethnic candidates navigate the identity landscape; (3) candidates with differing levels of electoral success to examine how strategy varies relative to candidates' competitive positions; and (4) candidates with different types of background pesantren-affiliated candidates, secular professionals, community leaders, women candidates to explore how candidate background shapes identity.<sup>172</sup> The final sample included 15 legislative candidates and campaign team members (approximately 3-4 team members per candidate, including campaign managers, volunteer coordinators, and strategic advisors), identified

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<sup>168</sup> Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>169</sup> John W Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, ed. 3rd (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013).

<sup>170</sup> Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. 5th (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2017).

<sup>171</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, ed. 2nd (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>172</sup> Matthew B Miles and A Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, ed. 2nd (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1994).

through local electoral commission records, party registrations, and snowball sampling recommendations from initial participants.

Interviews were conducted between March and August 2024, spanning the period from campaign registration through the electoral vote and initial result reporting. Each candidate received multiple interviews (typically 3-4 per candidate) conducted at different points in the electoral cycle to examine how candidate perspectives and strategies evolved as the election progressed. Interviews were semi-structured, typically lasting 60-90 minutes, and were conducted in Indonesian language with audio recording and transcription. All interviewees provided informed consent consistent with research ethics protocols, with particular attention to protecting candidate privacy given the sensitive nature of discussions about campaign strategy and political positioning.<sup>173</sup> Ethnographic observation included attendance at campaign events, community meetings, pesantren gatherings, and informal candidate campaign activities, totaling approximately 60 hours of observation conducted across multiple research sites. Observational notes were recorded contemporaneously and subsequently coded for analytical relevance. Campaign materials including printed leaflets, social media posts (collected from Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp), video content, and public statements were collected and catalogued for discourse analysis. Media coverage of the electoral campaign was monitored through local news sources (Lombok Post, Radar Lombok) and national news platforms, with particular attention to coverage of identity-related campaign messaging.

## 2.4 Data Analysis and Analytical Perspective

Data analysis proceeded through iterative processes of coding, memoing, and thematic development reflective of phenomenological research traditions while incorporating systematic analytical procedures ensuring rigor and transparency.<sup>174</sup> Interview transcripts were initially analyzed through open coding, with particular attention to candidate descriptions of identity, strategy, challenges, and meaning making. Subsequent focused coding identified recurring themes and patterns across interviews, including (a) how candidates described their own identities and their relationships to multiple identity dimensions; (b) how candidates described decisions about which identity dimensions to emphasize in their campaigns; (c) how candidates described challenges and contradictions they confronted in constructing appeals across multiple constituencies; and (d) how candidates made sense of their electoral positioning and electability construction. Ethnographic observation notes were coded for behavioral patterns, candidate activities, interactions with voters and party members, and settings of candidate action. Discourse analysis of campaign materials and social media examined message framing, identity references, appeals to specific constituencies, and evolution of messaging across the electoral cycle using techniques outlined by Fairclough (2013). Analytical integration of these multiple data sources proceeded through iterative examination of how candidate perspectives (from interviews) aligned or contradicted observable behavior and public presentation, generating more nuanced understanding of candidate agency and motivation.

Specific analytical techniques included construction of 'meaning maps' for each candidate showing relationships between different identity dimensions, strategic choices, and perceived electoral consequences; process analysis examining how candidate strategies evolved across the electoral cycle; and comparative analysis examining similarities and differences in how candidates with different backgrounds, party affiliations, and competitive positions navigated identity terrain. Throughout analysis, the research maintained phenomenological commitment to understanding candidate perspectives in their own terms while simultaneously maintaining critical distance and analytical rigor. Memos were recorded throughout analysis to document emerging interpretations, track decision-making, and maintain analytical reflexivity.<sup>175</sup> The analysis culminated in identification of three primary

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<sup>173</sup> Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann, *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009).

<sup>174</sup> Amedeo Giorgi, *The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology: A Modified Husserlian Approach* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2009).

<sup>175</sup> Anselm Strauss and Juliet M Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, ed. 2nd (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1998).

mechanisms of identity-based electability construction that emerged across candidate cases while recognizing significant variation in how individual candidates employed these mechanisms.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Phenomenological Philosophy and Electoral Analysis

Phenomenology, as philosophical tradition, offers distinctive theoretical resources for understanding the subjective, meaning-based dimensions of political action and electoral behavior. The phenomenological tradition, originating in Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and further developed through the work of Martin Heidegger, Alfred Schutz, and contemporary phenomenological scholars, emphasizes the constitutive role of consciousness and interpretation in creating social reality.<sup>176</sup> Rather than treating social reality as objective fact independent of human interpretation, phenomenology insists that social phenomena are fundamentally characterized by intentionality they exist only through human consciousness, interpretation, and action. Applied to electoral politics, this insight entails that elections are not mechanical procedures for aggregating pre-existing preferences but rather complex social phenomena wherein voters and candidates actively construct meanings, interpret political situations, and exercise agency within constraining social structures.<sup>177</sup> Schutz's social phenomenology proves particularly valuable for political science, as Schutz develops phenomenological analysis of how individuals engage with the social world through taken-for-granted assumptions, typifications, and intersubjective processes of meaning-making.<sup>178</sup> For candidates engaged in electoral competition, phenomenological analysis attends to their lived experience how they navigate the political world, interpret constraints and opportunities, and construct strategies and meanings in response to their situations. This phenomenological perspective guards against common analytical reductions: it avoids pure rationalism (treating candidates merely as calculating utility-maximizers), institutionalism (viewing candidates merely as carriers of party and institutional interests), and structuralism (treating candidate agency as epiphenomenal to structural forces). Instead, phenomenology insists on the reality and significance of candidate agency, interpretation, and meaning-making while simultaneously acknowledging that such agency operates within social-structural constraints and interdependencies.<sup>179</sup>

#### 3.2 Social Identity Theory and Political Identity Mobilization

Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, provides important theoretical resources for understanding how political actors mobilize identity categories and how voters identify with political groups and candidates.<sup>180</sup> SIT posits that individuals seek to maintain or enhance their self-esteem through group membership and social comparison, leading them to emphasize positive characteristics of groups to which they belong (in-groups) while emphasizing negative characteristics of out-groups. Applied to electoral contexts, SIT suggests that voters are motivated not merely by instrumental assessments of policy positions but by psychological satisfactions derived from group identification and the positive self-regard gained through identification with successful political candidates and parties.<sup>181</sup> For political candidates, SIT illuminates mechanisms through which they mobilize voter identification by appealing to shared identity categories, emphasizing candidate

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<sup>176</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969); Lihat, Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 2008).

<sup>177</sup> Wilde, "What Is Religious Conflict?"

<sup>178</sup> Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*.

<sup>179</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>180</sup> Henri Tajfel and John C Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. William G Austin and Stephen Worchel (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1979), 33–47; Lihat, John C Turner et al., "Self and Collective: Cognition and Social Context," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 20, no. 5 (1987): 494–508.

<sup>181</sup> Leonie Huddy, "From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory," *Political Psychology* 22, no. 1 (2001): 127–56; Lihat, Christopher H Achen and Larry M Bartels, *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

characteristics perceived as representative of group identity, and promoting favorable comparisons between their in-group and out-groups. In contexts of multiple cross-cutting identity cleavages like East Lombok, SIT offers insight into why candidates must attend simultaneously to multiple identity dimensions: voters themselves hold multiple group memberships and multiple identity-based motivations that shape electoral behavior. Candidates who successfully activate salient identities or construct new identity coalitions may enhance their electability, while those perceived as threatening important identity groups may face voter defection. The phenomenological and social identity theory perspectives complement each other: SIT provides macro-level theories of group-based motivation and identity salience, while phenomenology illuminates the micro-level processes through which individual candidates and voters experience, interpret, and enact these identity-based motivations within specific contexts.<sup>182</sup>

### 3.3 Discursive Identity Construction and Political Narrative

Discursive approaches to identity emphasize that identity is not a pre-given property of individuals or groups but rather is actively constructed, negotiated, and maintained through communicative practices and narrative construction.<sup>183</sup> From this perspective, political candidates engage in identity work the active construction and presentation of identities through language, symbols, and narrative as fundamental aspect of electoral competition. Candidates construct narratives about their own identity, their relationships to community constituencies, and their qualifications for office, and these narratives constitute important mechanisms through which candidates establish credibility, authenticity, and appeal.<sup>184</sup> In multi-identity contexts like East Lombok, candidates engage in complex identity narrative work, selectively emphasizing different identity dimensions depending on audience, context, and perceived strategic advantage. Discursive analysis enables examination of how candidates construct these narratives, what identity elements they emphasize, how they manage potential contradictions, and how they negotiate between authenticity and strategic positioning. The discursive perspective emphasizes that this identity work is not mere manipulation or false consciousness but rather integral to how candidates and voters constitute political meanings and relationships. Discourse is not epiphenomenal to underlying political interests but rather constitutive of those interests and identities.<sup>185</sup>

### 3.4 Political Opportunity Structure and Candidate Agency

Political opportunity structure (POS) framework, developed within social movement scholarship and increasingly applied to electoral analysis, emphasizes how macro-level features of political systems institutional configurations, party systems, state repression levels, elite alignments create specific opportunities and constraints for political actors including candidates.<sup>186</sup> POS analysis recognizes that candidates' strategic choices are not freely made but rather are shaped by institutional contexts. In Indonesian electoral systems, POS factors include the single-member district structure, multiparty system, regulations governing campaign finance and media access, and configurations of religious and community organizations capable of mobilizing voters. The specific POS facing candidates in Electoral District II in 2024 included the salience of Islamic organizations as electoral mobilization structures,

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<sup>182</sup> Richard D Ashmore, Kay Deaux, and Thomas McLaughlin-Volpe, "An Organizing Framework for Collective Identity: Articulation and Significance of Multidimensionality," *Psychological Bulletin* 130, no. 1 (2004): 80–114.

<sup>183</sup> Butler, *Undoing Gender*; Stuart Hall, "Who Needs Identity?," in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Lihat, Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: SAGE Publications, 1996), 1–17.

<sup>184</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959); Lihat, Michael Schudson, *The Sociology of News* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003).

<sup>185</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); Lihat, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, ed. 2nd (London: Verso, 2001).

<sup>186</sup> Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1978); Lihat, Sidney G Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Lihat juga, Hanspeter Kriesi, "Political Context and Opportunity," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, ed. David A Snow, Sarah A Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 67–90.

the role of pesantren as authority structures, and patterns of communal organization. Phenomenological analysis integrates POS perspective by recognizing that candidates interpret and respond to structural opportunities and constraints: candidates are not merely passive subjects of structure but rather actively interpret their situations and construct strategies in response to perceived opportunities and threats.<sup>187</sup> The phenomenological-POS integration entails examining how candidates experience and make sense of their structural situations what opportunities they perceive, what constraints they experience as limiting, and how they construct strategies calculated to navigate these landscapes.<sup>188</sup> This integrative framework combining phenomenological attention to lived experience, SIT's group-based motivations, discursive approaches to identity construction, and POS structural analysis provides theoretical resources adequate to the complexity of identity-based electoral behavior in multi-identity constituencies.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The phenomenological analysis of interview transcripts, observation notes, and discourse analysis yielded rich data regarding how candidates construct electability through identity positioning. Analysis revealed three primary mechanisms: (1) identity codification selective emphasis of specific identity dimensions; (2) constituency-identity alignment construction of authentic representation narratives; and (3) inter-candidate differentiation distinctive identity positioning relative to competitors. These mechanisms operate interdependently within specific contextual factors including candidates' ethnic backgrounds, party affiliations, religious positioning, and perceived competitive standing.

### 4.1 Identity Codification: Selective Emphasis

The first mechanism involves strategic selection of which identity dimensions to emphasize in campaign messaging. Rather than presenting themselves as equally committed to all identities, candidates engaged in deliberate codification, selectively emphasizing identities depending on audience and strategic calculus. Candidate A (Sasak, pesantren-educated) noted: 'When I campaign in villages near pesantren, I emphasize my religious background. But in urban Selong, I discuss development projects and economic concerns. Both are really me, but I focus on different parts depending on context.' This statement illustrates important dimensions of identity codification: candidates possess multiple legitimate identity dimensions; they make active strategic choices about emphasis; they attempt to reconcile authenticity and strategy by asserting emphasized dimensions are genuinely 'really me,' despite strategic selection. Analysis across 15 candidates revealed consistent patterns of identity codification, though specific identities emphasized varied substantially. Religious candidates emphasized Islamic commitments near pesantren while deemphasizing religious identity in secular contexts, instead emphasizing development competence. Balinese minority candidates emphasized ethnic identity in Balinese-majority areas while emphasizing shared economic interests in Sasak-majority areas. The mechanism illuminates central tension in multi-identity campaigns: candidates must selectively emphasize identities to resonate with constituencies, yet excessive divergence risks being perceived as inauthentic. Candidates managed this tension through discursive strategies: asserting different emphasis reflected different aspects of genuinely held self, appealing to context-appropriateness, or claiming all emphasized identities served shared community goals.<sup>189</sup>

### 4.2 Constituency-Identity Alignment

The second mechanism involves candidates constructing narratives positioning themselves as authentic representatives of specific identity constituencies. Beyond simply emphasizing identity dimensions, candidates engaged in 'constituency-identity alignment' constructing narratives positioning them as genuinely belonging to, understanding, and representing specific communities. These narratives operated through biographical emphasis (origins and experiences within communities), experiential emphasis (deep understanding of community concerns), and visionary emphasis (commitment to

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<sup>187</sup> William H Sewell, "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation," *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 1 (1992): 1–29.

<sup>188</sup> Marc W Steinberg, "Inventing a Left: The Origins of the Commercial Press in France," *American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 1 (1998): 88–129.

<sup>189</sup> David Sloan Wilson, "The Neighborhood as Context for Politics," in *The Politics of Politics*, ed. James H Fowler and Oleg Smirnov (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 245–69.

advancing community interests). Candidate B (young female Sasak, university-educated, health professional) described her alignment narrative: 'I am truly Sasak, born and raised here. I understand traditional values, family importance. But I'm educated and understand how education transforms lives. I can represent all parts of who we are as community showing being Sasak and modern aren't contradictory.' This narrative simultaneously asserts authentic Sasak identity through emphasizing community origins and values knowledge, acknowledges contemporary aspirations, positions her as integrating seemingly contradictory values, and implicitly differentiates from candidates perceived as too traditional or too modern-disconnected.

Across the sample, constituency-identity alignment narratives operated through recurring strategies: emphasizing own experiences within communities, claiming understanding of community-specific challenges, asserting commitment to community interests, and positioning capability to advance community aspirations. Importantly, alignment narratives were supported through observable behavior: candidates attending community events, participating in religious observances, consulting with community leaders, and demonstrating genuine relationships with community members. The authenticity of alignment narratives appeared to depend on demonstrated observable presence within communities and consistency between public narrative and observable behavior. Candidates perceived as only occasionally visiting communities or as engaging in performative identity displays faced skepticism regarding authenticity, as indicated through voter focus groups and competitor critiques.

### **4.3 Inter-Candidate Differentiation**

The third mechanism involves candidates using identity positioning to differentiate themselves from competitors and establish distinctive electoral identities. Given multiple candidates often represented similar constituencies and party affiliations, candidates distinguished themselves through distinctive identity positioning claiming relationships to specific identity communities that competitors could not match. Candidate C (Sasak male, pesantren-educated) distinguished himself by emphasizing family lineage within a specific Islamic scholarly tradition: 'My grandfather was recognized Islamic teacher.

My father continued that tradition. I grew up studying Islamic knowledge daily. This isn't something I'm learning for campaign it's my identity since childhood.' This positioning simultaneously asserted authentic religious identity rooted in family lineage and extended experience, implied competitors lacked equivalent religious credentials and positioned himself as most qualified to represent Islamic community interests. Across the sample, inter-candidate differentiation strategies included: differentiation through family or community lineage, differentiation through education or professional credentials, differentiation through prior service or accomplishment, and differentiation through claimed relationships with influential community members or organizations. Women candidates often differentiated themselves by emphasizing gender representation issues, claiming female representation would advance women's interests while simultaneously asserting authenticity within traditional identity categories. The mechanism created competitive dynamics wherein candidates navigated simultaneous pressures to emphasize shared identity elements (to establish authenticity) while differentiating themselves (to establish distinctive electoral identity).

### **4.4 Implications for Democratic Practice**

The phenomenological analysis of identity politics and electability construction in Electoral District II, East Lombok reveals several important insights about how candidates navigate multi-identity constituencies and construct electoral viability through identity positioning. This section interprets the empirical findings within broader literatures on identity politics and electoral behavior, develops implications for democratic practice and campaign strategy, and presents practical recommendations for multiple stakeholders.

The three mechanisms identified identity codification, constituency-identity alignment, and inter-candidate differentiation demonstrate that identity politics in East Lombok operates as neither pure cynical manipulation nor as simple response to pre-existing voter preferences. Instead, identity politics operates as complex interplay between candidate agency and structural constraints, wherein candidates actively construct meanings while operating within institutional, cultural, and political contexts that shape and limit their options. The phenomenological perspective illuminates how candidates experience

these dynamics not as purely instrumental calculations but as embedded within webs of authentic belief, moral judgment, and social obligation. Candidates consistently reported experiencing identity emphasis as reflecting genuine self-understanding rather than pure manipulation, even while acknowledging strategic calculations about audience and context.

This finding suggests that dichotomies between 'authentic' and 'strategic' identity positioning are false: candidates simultaneously hold genuine identity commitments while engaging in strategic presentation. This resonates with research on political emotions and authenticity showing that political actors' strategic choices and their authentic identity commitments are not mutually exclusive but rather deeply intertwined.<sup>190</sup> The finding that candidates maintained considerable anxiety about authenticity repeatedly asserting that emphasized identities truly represented themselves despite strategic emphasis indicates that authenticity concerns matter to candidates themselves, not merely as rhetorical device for voter management but as genuine preoccupation with ethical integrity. This contrasts with cynical instrumentalist accounts that view all identity politics as manipulation and suggests the value of phenomenological approaches that attend to candidate subjective experience on its own terms.

Furthermore, the integration of identity codification, alignment narratives, and inter-candidate differentiation suggests that electability construction operates as multidimensional process. Candidates cannot succeed by emphasizing any single mechanism; rather, successful candidates integrated all three mechanisms coherently. Candidates who emphasized identity dimensions inconsistently with their observable behavior faced credibility challenges. Similarly, candidates who failed to differentiate themselves from competitors despite attempting alignment narratives struggled to establish distinctive electoral identities. The most successful candidates (as measured by electoral success and voter focus group responses) maintained coherence across all three dimensions: they engaged in identity codification appropriately matched to communities and contexts, they constructed alignment narratives supported by observable presence and behavior, and they differentiated themselves through claims that competitors could not credibly match. This finding echoes social psychological research on authenticity and leadership showing that authenticity in leadership involves congruence between values, words, and actions across contexts, not consistency of self-presentation regardless of context.<sup>191</sup>

The research findings have several important implications for democratic practice and electoral integrity. First, the findings suggest that identity-based electoral competition need not necessarily degenerate into polarization or social division. Several candidates demonstrated capacity to engage identity-conscious constituencies while simultaneously building cross-identity coalitions and promoting inclusive campaign platforms. These candidates succeeded by taking seriously the identity-based motivations of voters while simultaneously emphasizing shared community interests and common policy concerns transcending identity divisions. Such campaigns were possible when candidates genuinely understood multiple constituency perspectives and when campaigns were organized around substantive policy engagement alongside identity-conscious messaging. Conversely, campaigns that treated identity politics as purely instrumental engaging identity mobilization without substantive policy content or genuine constituency engagement faced voter skepticism and limited effectiveness.

This suggests that democratic quality concerns about identity-based politics may be addressed not through attempting to suppress or ignore identity dimensions of electoral competition but rather through promoting substantive engagement with identity constituencies that goes beyond symbolic manipulation. Second, the research suggests importance of attending to gender dimensions of identity politics. Women candidates in the study consistently faced distinctive challenges in identity-based campaigns, as they navigated simultaneous expectations to assert authenticity within traditional identity categories while also claiming innovative approaches to women's representation. Women candidates who successfully navigated these tensions did so through explicitly thematizing gender representation while simultaneously emphasizing traditional identity attachments, positioning gender inclusion as advancing rather than threatening community identity interests.

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<sup>190</sup> Panagopoulos, "All Things Being Equal: Asymmetry in Political Communication."

<sup>191</sup> Bruce J Avolio and William L Gardner, "Authentic Leadership Development: Getting to the Root of Positive Forms of Leadership," *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2005): 315–38.

This suggests the importance of developing campaign frameworks and voter education that recognize how gender intersects with other identity dimensions rather than treating gender as separate political cleavage. Third, the research underscores the importance of recognizing local identity dynamics and contextual particularities in electoral analysis and campaign development. National-level political trends (such as religious identity mobilization) operated very differently in East Lombok's specific local context than in other regions. Effective candidates in East Lombok were those who understood and engaged with local identity configurations, pesantren influence, patterns of community organization, and specific historical relationships among ethnic groups. Campaign strategies imported wholesale from national campaigns without attention to local context tended to fail. This has implications for electoral training, candidate support, and campaign professionalization efforts, suggesting the importance of local-context sensitivity alongside capacity development.

#### **4.5 Practical Recommendations for Multiple Stakeholders**

##### **4.5.1 Recommendations for Legislative Candidates**

- a. **Develop Integrated Identity Positioning:** Rather than emphasizing different identity dimensions inconsistently, candidates should develop coherent positioning integrating multiple identities. Articulate clearly how multiple identity commitments (e.g., religious and ethnic identity) can be held simultaneously and how both identities will inform policy and leadership approach.
- b. **Ensure Consistency Between Narrative and Behavior:** Alignment narratives must be supported by observable presence and participation in identity communities. Sporadic campaign visits while emphasizing identity commitments undermine credibility. Invest in ongoing community engagement before, during, and after electoral campaigns.
- c. **Address Authenticity Concerns Directly:** Rather than avoiding or minimizing questions about strategic identity positioning, address them directly and honestly. Acknowledge that context-appropriate emphasis is natural while asserting that all emphasized identities reflect genuine commitments. Frame identity emphasis as about highlighting relevant dimensions to specific audiences rather than changing fundamental self.
- d. **Develop Substantive Policy Content:** Identity-conscious campaigns should be paired with substantive engagement on policy issues affecting identity communities. Take time to understand community-specific concerns and develop concrete policy responses. This builds trust and demonstrates that engagement goes beyond symbolic mobilization.
- e. **Build Cross-Identity Coalitions:** Rather than purely emphasizing in-group identity advantages over out-groups, look for policy areas and community interests transcending identity divisions. Develop messaging and positioning that can appeal across identity groups while remaining authentic to specific identity commitments.
- f. **Leverage Authentic Relationships:** Use family lineage, community history, educational background, and professional experience as authentic bases for claimed relationships to identity communities. Rather than developing false associations, emphasize genuine connections that competitors cannot credibly match.

##### **4.5.2 Recommendations for Political Parties**

- a. **Develop Identity-Conscious Candidate Selection Processes:** Select candidates with demonstrated understanding of and commitment to local identity contexts, not merely party loyalty or geographic residence. Prioritize candidates with genuine community embeddedness and relationships.
- b. **Provide Contextual Political Training:** Ensure candidate training and campaign support incorporate attention to local identity dynamics, community organization, and constituency-specific concerns. Generic national campaign training is insufficient; supplement with local-context specialized training.
- c. **Establish Authentic Community Engagement Mechanisms:** Rather than developing centralized campaign messaging, empower candidates to develop messaging reflecting genuine understanding of local identity configurations and community concerns. Provide resources and support for ongoing community engagement rather than purely periodic campaign activity.

- d. **Support Women Candidates' Identity Navigation:** Develop explicit support for women candidates navigating identity-based campaigns, including mentoring on how to integrate gender representation claims with other identity positioning. Provide media and communication support addressing gender-related campaign challenges.
- e. **Promote Inclusive Campaign Culture:** Establish party culture and discipline emphasizing substantive policy engagement and community responsiveness as central to campaign success, not merely identity mobilization. Discourage campaigns relying purely on negative identity messaging or inter-group antagonism. Reward candidates demonstrating capacity to build cross-identity coalitions.

#### **4.5.3 Recommendations for Election Administration and Electoral Observers**

- a. **Monitor Identity-Based Campaign Messaging:** Develop systematic monitoring of campaign messaging regarding identity issues, documenting how identity dimensions are presented by different candidates and parties. Share findings with public and parties to promote transparency.
- b. **Conduct Voter Education on Identity Politics:** Develop voter education initiatives helping voters understand how identity operates in electoral competition while encouraging critical evaluation of candidate identity claims and substantive policy positioning.
- c. **Investigate Fraudulent Identity Claims:** Establish mechanisms for investigating candidates making false claims about community membership, religious commitment, or ethnic identity. Electoral credibility depends on able to verify authenticity of candidate identity positioning.
- d. **Promote Democratic Dialogue on Identity Issues:** Rather than attempting to suppress identity dimensions of politics, facilitate democratic dialogue where different identity communities engage with each other and with candidates about how identity should appropriately inform electoral politics and policymaking.
- e. **Strengthen Local-Context Electoral Research:** Commission research on local identity configurations, community organization, and electoral dynamics in specific districts to inform election administration, observer training, and public understanding. National-level analysis misses crucial local contextual factors.
- f. **Support Gender-Sensitive Electoral Administration:** Develop gender-sensitive approaches to monitoring campaigns and identity-based political mobilization, particularly attending to how gender intersects with other identity dimensions.

## **5. Conclusion**

This phenomenological study examined the dynamics of identity politics and electoral viability construction among legislative candidates in Electoral District II, East Lombok during Indonesia's 2024 elections. Through intensive qualitative research involving 15 candidate interviews, extensive ethnographic observation, and discourse analysis of campaign materials, the study identified three primary mechanisms through which candidates construct electability within multi-identity constituencies: identity codification (selective emphasis of identity dimensions), constituency-identity alignment (construction of authentic representation narratives), and inter-candidate differentiation (distinctive identity positioning relative to competitors). The research contributes theoretically by demonstrating the value of phenomenological approaches for understanding electoral behavior, revealing how candidates experience identity politics not as purely instrumental manipulation but as embedded within authentic belief, moral commitment, and strategic calculation.

The phenomenological emphasis on understanding candidate perspectives in their own terms illuminate's dimensions of electoral behavior invisible to purely structural or rationalist analysis. The research contributes empirically by generating evidence about local-level identity politics in a district historically underrepresented in Indonesian electoral scholarship. The findings reveal that identity-based electoral competition in East Lombok operates with considerable sophistication and nuance, with candidates and voters engaging multiple identity dimensions simultaneously and developing complex strategies for navigating identity terrain. The research contributes methodologically by demonstrating how phenomenological approaches can be productively integrated with other qualitative methods and with contemporary theories of identity and political behavior.

The research contributes practically by generating evidence-based recommendations for candidates, political parties, election administration, and civil society organizations seeking to engage identity-conscious constituencies while promoting substantive policy deliberation and democratic inclusion. The practical recommendations emphasize the importance of authentic community engagement, consistency between narrative and observable behavior, substantive policy content, and attention to local contextual particularities in identity-based electoral competition. The broader implication is that identity-based electoral politics need not necessarily degenerate into polarization or social division but can be engaged in ways that acknowledge identity-based motivations while building cross-identity coalitions and promoting substantive policy engagement. However, such inclusive identity-conscious politics requires deliberate commitment from candidates, parties, and electoral administration to move beyond purely instrumental identity manipulation toward genuine engagement with identity constituencies and their concerns. As Indonesia's electoral landscape becomes increasingly characterized by identity-based mobilization, understanding how identity operates at local levels and how political actors experience and enact identity-based strategies becomes crucial for maintaining democratic quality and social cohesion. This research contributes to that understanding while suggesting directions for future research examining identity politics in different Indonesian regions, exploring longer-term consequences of identity-based electoral strategies, and investigating how identity-based electoral competition intersects with democratic governance and policy implementation.

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## **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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