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Explaining the Effects of Political Islam and Preacher toward Prabowo's Electoral Dominance: Evidence from Pekanbaru and Kampar

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ABSTRAK

Sosok ulama di Indonesia memiliki peran krusial tidak hanya dalam urusan agama tetapi juga pada persoalan sosial politik. Literatur terkait perilaku pemilih di berbagai negara menunjukkan bahwa pemuka agama memiliki peran besar dalam memengaruhi orientasi dan perilaku politik dari para pengikutnya. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh Ustadz Abdul Somad (UAS) terhadap peningkatan signifikan perolehan suara Prabowo pada Pilpres 2019 di Provinsi Riau. Meskipun secara nasional perolehan suara Prabowo kalah dari Jokowi dengan margin yang besar, Prabowo berhasil memperoleh kemenangan di 13 dari 34 provinsi, salah satunya adalah Riau. Kami berasumsi bahwa Prabowo memperoleh keunggulan elektoral atas Jokowi di Provinsi Riau karena faktor dukungan UAS yang berpengaruh signifikan terhadap peningkatan tajam suaranya dibandingkan dengan Pemilu 2014. Tulisan ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif untuk menguji kecenderungan ini. Data dalam penelitian ini bersumber dari survei yang difokuskan pada dua daerah dengan penduduk terpadat di Riau, yaitu Pekanbaru dan Kabupaten Kampar. Studi ini mengonfirmasi bahwa UAS memberikan efek signifikan terhadap orientasi dan perilaku pemilih Muslim untuk memilih Prabowo pada pemilihan presiden terakhir. Temuan lainnya juga sejalan dengan beberapa penelitian terdahulu yang menunjukkan besarnya pengaruh agama, khususnya Islam, sebagai faktor penting yang mendorong perilaku politik umat Islam. Kontribusi dari studi ini adalah untuk menambah khazanah literatur tentang perilaku pemilih pada

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konteks politik Indonesia dengan menguji pengaruh dukungan politik dari sosok ulama populer—UAS—terhadap distribusi perolehan suara kandidat presiden pada kontestasi pemilihan presiden pada tahun 2019. Hal ini semakin diperkuat dengan kehadiran dan peran dari sosok ulama yang memberikan dukungan kepada masing-masing kandidat presiden pada kontestasi politik di 2019.

Kata kunci: UAS, Prabowo, perilaku pemilih, Pilpres 2019

ABSTRACT

Ulama in Indonesia have critical roles not only in religious teachings but also in socio-political affairs. The literature on voter behavior in many countries shows that religious leaders have critical roles in directing the political orientation and behavior of their followers. This article aims to examine the influence of Ustadz Abdul Somad (UAS) toward a significant increase of Prabowo's vote share in the 2019 presidential election in Riau Province. Although Prabowo lost to Jokowi with a large margin in the last election, he was able to claim electoral victory in 13 out of 34 provinces—one of them is Riau. We assume that Prabowo gained the electoral advantage over his rival in Riau due to electoral support from UAS that ultimately gave significant effect toward a sharp increase for his votes compared to the 2014 election. We apply the quantitative method to examine the phenomenon. The data are mainly collected through a survey conducted in the two most populous regions in Riau—Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency. Our study confirms that UAS has a significant effect on Muslim voters' orientation and behavior to vote for Prabowo in the last presidential election. Other findings in this study are also in line with previous studies suggesting a critical influence of religion, particularly Islam, in driving Muslim's political behavior. The contribution of our study is to enrich the literature on voter behavior in Indonesian politics by examining the influence of political support from a popular preacher—UAS—on the distribution of electoral support for presidential candidates in the 2019 election. This is further strengthened by the presence and role of *ulama* figures who give their support to each presidential candidate in the political contestation in 2019.

Keywords: UAS, Prabowo, voting behavior, 2019 presidential election

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INTRODUCTION

The politicization of religious identity in the last election impacted not only Muslim voting behavior but also the rise of Islamic preachers in directing voters' political preference. Since the presidential nomination, many preachers played active roles in directing political discourse for national leadership in the next future. For example, the National Movement to Guard Ulama's Fatwa (*Gerakan Nasional Pengawal Fatwa Ulama*) held a meeting in July 2019 to decide *ijtima' ulama* (consensus) on vice-presidential candidates for Prabowo. Although it was Jokowi who chose a figure of Islamic preacher, Ma'ruf Amin, as his running mate, both presidential candidates got political support from some com-

ponents of Indonesian Muslim communities in the electoral contest (Fachrudin 2019; McBeth 2018; Slama 2019).

The electoral vote for Jokowi–Amin nationally reached 55.32%, while Prabowo–Sandi only gained 44.68% (Komisi Pemilihan Umum 2019). In Riau Province, Prabowo claimed electoral victory with 61.28% votes over 38.72% for Jokowi. There is a sharp difference in results between the 2019 election and the previous election in 2014. In 2014, although Prabowo also won in Riau, he only prevailed in two out of twelve districts, Pekanbaru City and Kampar Regency, while in 2019, he dominated and gained massive votes in all districts. Moreover, Jokowi lost a larger significant vote compared to the 2014 election, where he could competitively collect 49.88% in this province (Azanella 2019). With this huge gap in the electoral vote, a normative explanation for this cause was because of Sandiaga Uno, Prabowo's running mate coming from this province. However, we try to find an alternative explanation by examining the influence of a popular preacher from this province, Ustadz Abdul Somad (UAS), towards the massive electoral support for Prabowo–Sandi in Riau.

Our decision to make UAS the focus of this study is mainly based on the consideration that with the increasingly intense mobilization of Islam following the 2019 elections, a prominent and respected Islamic preacher has a more significant impact in driving Muslim's political behavior rather than Sandiaga Uno, who was born and raised in Riau. Our view is also strengthened by the fact that UAS was named by GNPF as running mate for Prabowo in the 2019 presidential election because his popularity could give an electoral effect to Prabowo's electability in the presidential election. Moreover, Hanum Rais initiated #SomadEffect hashtags in her social media to convince UAS that he was the right person for the next national leadership by becoming Prabowo's running mate (Sutrisno 2018). Although he refused the offer to be a vice-president candidate for Prabowo, it was known by the public that he gave his support to Prabowo's candidacy for presidential office in 2019 (Kholid 2019). Before the voting day, he and Prabowo were involved in direct conversations depicting UAS's political endorsement for Prabowo,

where their meeting was aired publicly by a private television channel in Indonesia. Thus, a critical question arose here: Did UAS's support to Prabowo–Sandi significantly increase their electoral support in—his home province—Riau?

As a part of an individual's identity, religion has a significant influence on the political behavior of its followers in many parts of the world (Grewal et al. 2019; Grzymala-Busse 2012; Margolis 2017; Omelicheva and Ahmed 2018; Tessler 2010). The influence of religion on an individual's political orientation is also moderated by the presence of religious leaders or clerics who give their electoral support for particular candidates and parties (Boussalis, Coan, and Holman 2020; Djupe and Gilbert 2002; Djupe and Smith 2019; Freedman 2020; Glazier 2018; McClendon and Riedl 2021; Smith 2019). In the Muslim world, *ulama* (preachers) as individuals who have the authority in the teachings of Islamic thoughts are certainly the influential figures among Muslims as *the ummah* (community of believers). However, discussions on *ulama* and politics in the Muslim countries or countries with large Muslim population are, to the best of our knowledge, taking place in the institutional framework concerning the interplays between *ulama* and the state (Hatina 2010; Mostarom 2014; Mouline 2014; Osman 2012; Pierret 2013; Saat 2018; Saif 2020; Scott 2012; Zaman 2002).

In Indonesia, discourses between Islam and the state remain a critical factor in directing the country's political narratives. In the field of political participation, Indonesian voters are commonly influenced by ideology and party affiliation (Fossati 2019; Liddle and Mujani 2007, 2010), figures of popular politicians (Fossati and Mietzner 2019), critical evaluations on government performance (Mujani and Liddle 2015; Mujani, Liddle, and Ambardi 2018) and even distribution of material incentives (Muhtadi 2019). However, Islam also plays a crucial part in shaping Muslims' political preferences and behavior (Bazzi, Koehler-Derrick, and Marx 2020; Mujani 2019, 2020; Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani 2012; Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani 2018). Additionally, the political activism of preachers further impacts toward Muslim's orientation in giving their electoral support (Winarni 2014). The study on the

political activism of *ulama* and its influence on Indonesian Muslim is predominantly centered on the state's semi-institutional religious authority represented by the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, Indonesian Ulama Council) and *ulama* having affiliation with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah as the two largest mass-Islamic organizations in Indonesia (Fealy and Bush 2014; Ichwan 2005; Lindsey 2012; Kusmayadi, Agung, and Andrias 2016; Nashir et al. 2019; Nasir 2014; Saat 2016). Considering the strength of the socio-cultural base of the organizations, it is understandable if *ulama* from these organizations have a critical influence on Muslim communities. Besides, NU and Muhammadiyah, in particular, have succeeded in establishing themselves in the structure of Indonesian society and penetrating Muslim life. Thus, the discussion on *ulama* and politics simply falls into the web of political patronage and clientelistic networks (Hamid 2013; Machmudi 2014; Pribadi 2018). However, when it turns to an individual preacher with a weak socio-cultural base because social media facilitate his rise—UAS in this case, we know very little precisely how this figure could drive voter behavior in the electoral competition. Therefore, our study tries to fill this gap and contribute to the literature on voting behavior in Indonesian politics.

POLITICAL ISLAM, ELECTORAL POLITICS AND VOTER BEHAVIOR IN INDONESIA

Islam and politics have been interesting topics for debates by scholars in political studies. A central issue that emerges from this case is the nexus between Islam and politics, particularly Islam's influences toward political affairs and development in the Muslim world. Unlike secularism which proposes the separation of religion and the state whereby the latter should remain neutral in public affairs, Islam embraces the notion of mutual relationships between religion and politics (Khatib and Bouma 2007). Secularism is perceived as an alien concept by most Muslim societies. A short explanation for this case is that historically, Muslim societies did not experience extremely conflicting conditions between the state and religion. The concept of secularism was actually

introduced by “colonial and imperial invaders and then kept alive by local elites who came to power after the post-colonial period” (Hashemi 2013, 81).

In the Muslim world, the emergence of political Islam is a response to “the perceived failure of secular ideologies of nationalism and socialism to deliver on their promises of anti-imperialist prosperity” (Akbarzadeh 2012, 1). The term political Islam itself simply refers to “the attempts of Muslim individuals, groups and movement to reconstruct the political, economic, social and cultural basis of their society along Islamic lines” (Esposito and Shahin 2013, 1). Islamists believe that “Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be regulated in contemporary Muslim worlds and how the idea should be implemented in some fashion” (Fuller and Lapp 2004, xi). In this sense, political Islam also involves “a form of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals groups and organizations that pursue political objectives and responds to contemporary’s societal challenges by imagining a future, the foundations for which rest on re-appropriated, reinvented concepts borrowed from the Islamic tradition” (Denoeux 2002, 61). In summary, political Islam tries to construct political systems in Muslim countries that align with the Islamic faith. It is because Islam, in Islamists’ point of view, is not only a religion but also the state (*din wa daulah*). They try to construct Muslim’s ideal society based on Islamic law (*shari’ah*) as Muslim’s guides in their lives as human beings and their spiritual relationship with God. Accordingly, it is not surprising if Islamists sensibly seek the implementation of *shari’ah* as a legal system governing the society in their political agendas (Roose 2017). Thus, capturing state power emerges as a crucial event in Islamists’ political trajectory to make their visions come into reality.

The use of Islamic identity in the struggle for political power often leads many political analysts to equate Islamism with violent movement. Nevertheless, a deeper examination of political Islam reveals that the existing Islamic movements around the world today are not a single entity based on one political organization. Each Islamist movement has its own way of realizing its ultimate goals (March 2015). It would be a mis-

leading assumption when perceiving Islamism as a violent character in nature. AyooB (2009, 22) explains that “political Islam is not a monolith and Islamist movements in different countries pursue nation-specific agendas and strategies, despite a superficial similarity in their rhetoric”. In this sense, it is essential to critically see how political development emerged in most Muslim countries where Islamist movements have their original roots and are massively operated there. It informs us that it is a local context of Muslim states that have mainly influenced the characteristics and development of Islamist movements (AyooB 2004).

In its relations to the existing political structure in the Muslim world, Bokhari and Senzai (2013, 26–27) classify Islamists into three groups—“acceptors, propagandists, insurrectionists”. Acceptors refer to the groups that accept the existing political system of the nation-state where they operate and follow rules of the game to pursue their goals through peaceful means. On the contrary, propagandists reject the idea of a nation-state and democracy as its political system. This second group tries to influence public opinion to be in favor of their ideological stances. Furthermore, they search for support from the state’s security apparatus to restructure its current political system into a universal caliphate. Finally, insurrectionists emerge as the most extreme groups that refuse to acknowledge the state along with its societal order. Unlike other groups engaged in non-violence manners, insurrectionists launch armed struggles, which they called *jihad*, to replace the current system with their own ideological conceptions on the state and political order. Al-Qaeda and ISIS are good examples of the third group of Islamist movements.

Yet from North Africa to Southeast Asia, Islamist movements pursuing their interests through peaceful means, participating in electoral politics remains larger than committing violence to reach political ends. Some of them succeed in gaining electoral victory to form governmental cabinets like the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP) or taking part as coalitional partners in the current government like in Indonesia. This explicitly shows that Islamists are ready to moderate their ideological and political standing as long as their countries’ politi-

cal spaces are widely available. In the same vein, other scholars point out that it is political contexts that eventually shape Islamist response to existing order and development (Bubalo, Fealy, and Mason 2008).

In Indonesia itself, adherents of political Islam have once again found their political space to maneuver freely in national affairs since democratization in 1998. After long decades under political restrictions from Suharto's New Order, they finally transformed their movements into a political party to reach their objectives through democratic and constitutional frameworks. The most significant political vehicle for Islamists in contemporary Indonesia that is widely known among analysts is the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). This party has got its socio-political inspiration from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as their ideological foundations to Islamize Indonesian society. Moreover, there are also other political parties with Islamic credentials: National Mandate Party (PAN), National Awakening Party (PKB), United Development Party (PPP), and Crescent Star Party (PBB).

In the realm of electoral competitions, Islamic parties in Indonesia, just like nationalists, follow pragmatic lines rather than programmatic considerations in influencing voters' political preferences. Even PKS has applied to catch-all parties as part of its political strategy in collecting voters' supports from wider societal spectrums although it has solid and disciplined cadres acting as the party's political machine (Tanuwidjaja 2012). Nevertheless, the result for Islamic parties remains to show average outcomes. There are no Islamic parties that emerged as a single majority in Indonesian elections in the last two decades. They are mainly in the range of medium-sized party, except PBB, that is still unable to take over the nationalist party in terms of collecting major electoral support from voters. As the largest religion in Indonesia, Islam does not automatically provide Islamic parties with an electoral advantage over nationalists. A deeper analysis of the electoral competitions presents another fact that Islamic parties have limited segmentations in Muslim voters, who mostly are moderate (Abdulsalam 2018). Both nationalist and Islamic parties are in races to garner the largest electoral votes from the same constituency, Muslim voters. For its political existence,

Islamists have no other choices except negotiating their ideological stance with “power sharing-based pragmatic politics” (Hasan 2009a).

Classic classification of Indonesian Muslims into *santri*, *priyayi*, and *abangan* had also contributed another advantage toward nationalists wherein most Muslim voters are more associated with nationalist parties due to cultural considerations rather than Islamic identity (Yumitro 2013). Based on institutional establishments, nationalists are one step ahead of Islamic parties because they are supported by broader patronage networks and bigger financial funding. Moreover, political Islam in contemporary Indonesia is indeed represented by not only Islamic parties but also “Islam-inclusive” and “secular-inclusive” parties (Baswedan 2004). More importantly, nationalist parties have now repositioned their socio-political standings into more accommodative towards religious aspirations to deeply penetrate their stronghold in the Muslim electorates and gain bigger electoral supports from Muslim voters (Tanuwidjaja 2010). Consequently, space for Islamic parties to market their political agendas during elections has become more limited, ultimately bringing lower electoral supports for them than nationalist parties.

Another important story on Indonesian political parties is, at an ideological level; currently, there is no significant differentiation among them regarding socio-political and even economic views. The only thing splitting party ideology is religion, especially in terms of the roles of Islam in country’s political affairs (Aspinall et al. 2018). Here, it underlines the fact that Islam truthfully still holds great potential to be a critical determinant in driving Muslim’s political orientation in electoral competition. We have witnessed this reality since 2014, where Islam has arisen as a powerful tool for the electoral campaign and mass mobilization to reach political interests.

The emergence of populist figures like Jokowi and Prabowo since 2014 has created a new phase of politicization of Islam. Through their populist rhetoric, both Jokowi and Prabowo have received extensive political support from Indonesian electorates. Prabowo is an example of a classic populist figure who tries to restructure of Indonesian democratic polity into neo-authoritarianism by condemning political decay

and corruption of Indonesian elites, while Jokowi is a new kind of technocratic populist who attempts to address government inability and ineffectiveness in delivering public policy for the development of the country (Mietzner 2015b, Case 2016).

However, in the Indonesian case, populism is supported by the politicization of socio-religious cleavage by populist figures that make it growing up on a bigger scale (Mietzner 2020). This case has automatically affected voter's acceptance toward populism that further suggested polarization among Indonesians into ideological cleavages, particularly Islamism and secular-nationalism (Fossati and Mietzner 2019). Exploitations of populist issues from those figures have shifted the center of political battle from "democratic cosmopolitanism" to massive uses of "conservative brand of religious nationalism" (Bourchier 2019). The 2014 election has been a starting point for "re-ideologized and repolarized Indonesian politics" with bigger potential conflicts between secularist-pluralist camps vis-à-vis Islamists (Mietzner 2015a). In this sense, Islamists seem trying to gain their political fortunes in the electoral battle into their favors by playing religious cards such as attacking those who opposed Islamic credentials. The case of Ahok during the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2017 was proof of the blatant use of Islamic mobilization for electoral campaigns that finally beat him. Nevertheless, Ahok's issue was only a beginning of a continuous political mobilization based on religious lines that culminated in the 2019 elections. After Ahok's falls, Islamists, with FPI as the central part of Islamic mobilization, have appeared with stronger confidence to defeat their main political target—Jokowi, frequently stigmatized as too secular and an agent of foreign countries.

Since the democratic transition in 1998, Islamic considerations have been playing their limited roles as the main driver for voters' behavior. Explanations on voter behavior are mostly centered on the party's leadership and voter identification towards particular parties, it is the main determinant that drives voters' political preferences (Liddle and Mujani 2007, 2010). With the implementation of general elections, Indonesian voters in certain degrees have emerged as critical citizens giving

their electoral support based on rational considerations such as making evaluations on overall government performance (Mujani, Liddle, and Ambardi 2018). Education and per capita income are the two critical determinants for the existence of this new kind of voters with rational calculations (Mujani and Liddle 2015). In relation to Islam, an observer noted that Indonesian politics in post-Suharto has the characteristics of political de-alignment referring to the absence of heavily political conflicts among elites and masses in extreme ideological lines during Old Order in 1945–1955 (Ufen 2008). Even another author concluded that post-Suharto politics was the end period for political Islam due to the institutional weaknesses of Islamic parties and its unfavorable supports from most of the registered voters in general elections (Hamayotsu 2011).

However, the changing of the Indonesian political landscape in 2014 has also shifted Indonesian voters' behavior, particularly among Muslim constituents. Mietzner and Muhtadi (2018) point out that, since Jokowi took over presidential power in 2014, there has been a sharp increase in radical and intolerant attitudes among conservative Muslims feeling excluded from current policy-making, which caused a proper condition for Islamic mobilizations. Furthermore, both authors also emphasize that a higher degree of conservatism surprisingly emerges from middle-class Muslims with higher education and income. At one point, this case has its impacts from the growth of Islamic pop culture that has consequently triggered large interests from urban middle-class Muslims on Islamic teachings. Since the democratic transition, we see the augmentation of Islamic tendency among Indonesian Muslims to express their religious beliefs in diverse way ranging from Islamic fashion, *halal* products, sharia banking, Islamic websites preference as sources of information to actively engage in charitable work for Islamic foundations (Fealy and White 2008).

Furthermore, this trend has been accelerated by the expansion of social media that Indonesian Muslims widely use. It has eventually made Islam not only “sets of rituals, beliefs, and doctrines but also a symbolic commodity relevant to social class demands for lifestyle,

modesty, and enjoyment accelerating the mushroom of Islamic pop culture” as a new form of piety (Hasan 2009b, 241–5). The rapid growth of television broadcasting and social media has also facilitated the emergence of popular preachers to actively communicate with larger Muslim audiences on religious discussions (Howell 2008). Therefore, figures of popular preachers ultimately emerge as new role models giving critical influence in shaping more religious piety among middle and upper-class Muslims in contemporary Indonesia even though they still have a conservative tendency in their characteristics.

The increase of Islamic pop culture has given its greater influences towards the rise of religious devoutness and creates expectations for a bigger role in the social, economic and political fields among Indonesian Muslims. Vedi Hadiz (2014, 3–4) calls this trend as “new Islamic populism” in which its main agenda is “reorganizing power to ensure greater access and control over the state and tangible resources led by the righteous to facilitate markets that operate in ways favorable to the *ummah*” Unlike the Turkish pious bourgeoisie who provide socio-economic bases for AKP to take control of the state, “the characteristics of Islamic populism in Indonesia are being shaped by the interests of those who find no place for themselves in the world of competition within markets or electoral politics” (Hadiz 2018, 6). Political exclusions and marginalization from current policies have significantly triggered grievances among conservative Muslims towards Jokowi’s government, with liberal secularists as his prominent supporters. It is the sense of grievance that is successfully exploited by “religious-political entrepreneurs” to take advantage of their political agendas by mobilizing the rise of religious sentiments among conservative Muslims against the existing order (Mietzner, Muhtadi, and Halida 2018).

The sharp rise of religious piety among urban and middle-class Muslims in Indonesia has provided larger occasions for Islamists and other religiopolitical entrepreneurs to gain bigger supporters for their political agendas. The use of Islam as a political campaign has made it easier for them to penetrate and shape Muslim’s political perception. Survey findings from experts on ideological representation in contemporary

Indonesia exposed the fact that there is a close alignment or ideological congruence between politicians and voters on the roles of Islam in political affairs (Fossati et al. 2020). Thus, it directly indicates that political Islam has surfaced as one of the principal forces structuring public attitudes and driving voters' behavior where they tend to give their electoral supports following their religious lines (Fossati 2019). Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: Political Islam has significantly elevated Prabowo's vote share in the 2019 presidential election in Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency.

The presence of popular Islamic preachers who not only teach religious thought but also present socio-political issues in their *dakwah* (proselytizing) has added another influence in driving Muslim's voting behavior. As we have pointed out in the introductory section above, preachers (*ulama*) are part of significant leverage whose voices would be certainly listened to by ordinary Muslims as the *ummah*. Nonetheless, the growth of conservative sentiments among Indonesian Muslims has placed *ulama* in the critical positions to guide their political preferences in accordance with religious lines. UAS, whom Indonesian Muslims widely know through his *dakwah* spread in social media, is no exception in this case. With a gentle approach and straightforward language in his *dakwah*, he has already gained a particular place in the heart of most Indonesian Muslims. Large Muslim masses attending his *dakwah* in various regions is straight evidence for his popularity and influence toward most Indonesian Muslims. Hence, we propose the hypotheses as follows:

H2: Ulama has a significant influence on the political preferences of ordinary Muslims to vote for Prabowo in the 2019 presidential election in Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency.

H3: UAS has weighty impacts on the significant increase of Prabowo's vote share in the 2019 presidential election in Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency.

METHODS

We applied a quantitative method to examine the influence of the figure of Abdul Somad and Islamic considerations towards voters' political preferences in the 2019 election in Riau. We conducted a survey by distributing the questionnaire to 388 Muslim respondents. The samples were taken proportionally through clustered random sampling in the two most populous regions in Riau, Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency. The margin of error in our survey is 5%, and the confidence interval is 95%. The primary consideration why our survey was focusing on these regions is that both are areas where there was a huge gap between votes for Prabowo and Jokowi. Our polls are a post-election survey conducted in January 2020. We set three independent variables— political Islam preferences, perception towards *ulama*, and UAS Index —and analyze those explanatory variables with the pattern of electoral votes for Prabowo and Jokowi in the 2019 presidential election in Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency as the dependent variable. Since the dependent variable is binary dichotomous (“1” for voted for Prabowo and “0” for voted for Jokowi), we applied binary logistic regression to analyze the probability of respondents to vote for Prabowo or Jokowi. First, we ran reliability tests and conducted a factor analysis for items in each explanatory/independent variable to determine the sampling adequacy of data and examine the natural factors generated from the variables. Afterward, we analyzed four models of binary logistic regression. The first three models are applied to each explanatory variable—political Islam preferences, perception towards *ulama*, and UAS Index—as one single model. The fourth model is applied for all explanatory variables as independent variables.

Table 1. Model of Analyses

No	Independent	Indicators/Items	Dependent
1	Political Islam Preference	Preferences on Political Islam	Voted for Prabowo in the 2019 Presidential Election
2	<i>Ulama's</i> Roles	Perception towards <i>Ulama's</i> Roles in Politics	
3	UAS Index	Engagement and Perceptions towards UAS	
4	All Independent Variables	All Independent & Control Variables	

To measure respondent's views, we provided four answer choices for the main questions, that is, strongly disagree (score 1), disagree (score 2), agree (score 3), and strongly agree (score 4). We did not give an option for a "neutral answer" in our questionnaire because we would like to gain more assertive responses from respondents for each question we asked.

Building 'Political Islam Preferences' Index

Our first independent variable is 'preferences on political Islam'. As demonstrated by many studies, the rise of religious conservatism in Indonesia has played a critical role in driving the political preference of Muslim voters in electoral competition. For this part, we gave respondents questions on their main considerations in giving electoral support during the 2019 presidential election. Our questions consist of (1) considering and following Islamic teachings in voting presidential candidates; (2) choosing candidates who adhere to Islamic teachings; (3) electing candidates that have a strong commitment towards national values/culture and treating followers of all religions equally; (4) preferring candidates who supported by the *ulama*; (5) picking up candidates that support the implementation of Islamic law (*sharia*) as a foundation for the government and the state; (6) refusing candidates that have hostility toward Islam.

We developed an additive index of 'political Islam preferences' based on responses to align the six questions above. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the variables that make up the political Islam preferences index is 0.865, meaning that the variables have a high degree of internal consistency. This suggests that the items in the test are highly correlated. We also ran a factor analysis to examine the validity of political Islam preferences items to test the construct validity of the political Islam preferences questions. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy for the factor analysis was meritorious (KMO = 0.877) and statistically significant ($p = <.001$). An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each factor, and small coefficients (absolute value <0.4) were suppressed. The result shows component matrix value is

above 0.6 for each six-item. It suggests that each item of political Islam preferences variable is valid.

Perceptions towards Ulama's Roles in Politics

As we mentioned above, *ulama* play an important role in educating Muslims on Islamic teachings. They are respected figures in Muslim society and even possess critical influence that can be converted into political gains. We asked our respondents to see their perception of the roles and positions of Islam and *ulama* in state affairs. The questions are (1) Islam is not only a religion but also a state, (2) Islam and politics are inseparable, (3) *ulama* should be respected, and their advice has to be listened to by Muslims, (4) the president with his government officials should listen to the inputs from *ulama* in managing state affairs, (5) the government should not discriminate against Islam, (6) the government should not attempt to criminalize *ulama*.

We developed an index of 'perceptions towards *ulama*'s roles in politics' (*Ulama* Index) based on the responses to align the six questions above. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the variables that make up the *ulama* index is 0.751, meaning that the variables have a high degree of internal consistency. This suggests that the items in the test are highly correlated. We also ran a factor analysis to examine the validity of *ulama* items to test the construct validity of the political Islam preferences questions. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy for the factor analysis was meritorious (KMO = 0.751) and statistically significant ($p = <.001$). An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each factor, and small coefficients (absolute value <0.4) were suppressed. The result shows component matrix value is above 0.581 for each six-item. It suggests that each item of the *ulama* variable is valid.

Measuring UAS's Influence: Building UAS Index

UAS is widely known in Indonesia for his comments on Islamic thoughts in Indonesians' daily lives, which are massively spread in so-

cial media. He has expertise in Hadith and *Fiqih* (Islamic law). He was also a lecturer at the Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University, Riau until 2019. What makes him famous among Indonesians is his sense of humor in presenting each Islamic lecture to the public. His personality represents the culture of marginalized, plain attire, frank in spoken; moreover, he also speaks in a thick-regional accent that makes his appearance is attached to ordinary people (Arafat 2019). Despite the pros and cons to his comments regarding several religious issues, he has emerged as one of the most influential clerics in present-day Indonesia (Sudrajat and Setyadi 2017).

We arranged UAS Index to measure how respondents perceive the figure of UAS and to what extent it influenced voter's political attitudes in the last presidential election. The Index is divided into two parts. The first section consists of simple questions to identify their familiarity and engagement toward UAS i.e. (1) do they know UAS, (2) have they ever directly attended UAS's lectures, (3) do they actively follow UAS's teachings in social media, and (4) how often in a week they listen to UAS's teachings on Youtube. Second, we gave them main questions on the figure of UAS to see their perception of UAS—(1) UAS is a role model for Indonesian Muslims, (2) I like UAS's Islamic lectures, (3) UAS's lectures have given large bits of advice to Muslims inviting *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (commanding the good and forbidding the evil), and (4) UAS should actively be involved in government to prevent corruption and abuses of power.

We developed the 'UAS index' based on the responses to the eight questions related to UAS. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the variables that make up the UAS index is 0.831, meaning that the variables have a high degree of internal consistency. This suggests that the items in the test are highly correlated. We also ran a factor analysis to examine the validity of UAS items to test the construct validity of the perceptions and engagement towards UAS's questions. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy for the factor analysis was meritorious (KMO = 0.856) and statistically significant ($p = <.001$). An initial analysis was also run to obtain eigenvalues for each factor, and

small coefficients (absolute value <0.4) were suppressed. Two factors had eigenvalues above the Kaiser criterion of 1.0. Reliability analysis was then conducted on these two rotated component matrices, producing for the first factor, $\alpha = 0.637$, and for the second factor, $\alpha = 0.858$. Based on the factor analysis, we then called the first-factor 'engagement to UAS' and the second as 'perceptions towards UAS.' Yet, since the KMO and reliability analysis showed consistency and validity, we still used all eight items to build the UAS Index without dividing it into those two factors.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Respondent Characteristics

Respondent characteristics are summarized in table 1. Most of our respondents' ages are 22–30 years old (37.11%), with 50.26% female and 49.74% male. The majority of the respondents are Malay (48.97%). Most of them graduated from university (37.37%). Furthermore, housewives (17.01%) and farmers/breeders/fishers (22.42%) are the two largest respondents' occupations.

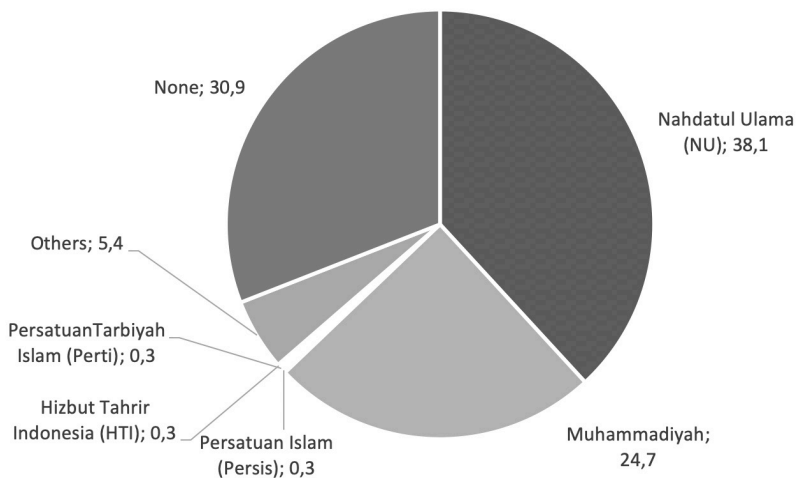
Table 2. Demographic Statistics of Respondents

Variables	Category	Percent
Age Group	22-30	37.11
	31-40	28.09
	41-55	27.84
	>56	6.96
Gender	Female	50.26
	Male	49.74
Ethnic	Malay	48.97
	Java	23.45
	Minangkabau	15.98
	Batak	11.08
	Others	0.52
Education	Elementary School	9.02
	Junior High School	25.26
	Senior High School	26.29
	Diploma/Bachelor	37.37
	Master	2.06

Occupation	Farmers/breeders/fishers	17.01
	Manual labor/driver/handyman	2.32
	Trader/entrepreneur	7.99
	Civil Servants	1.80
	Teacher	7.73
	Professionals (Lawyers/Consultants)	0.77
	Students	5.93
	Housewives	22.42
	Others	34.02
Income	Subsidies from parents	6.96
	< 1.000.000,-	21.39
	1.000.000- 2.000.000,-	27.06
	2.500.000-4.000.000,-	38.14
	5.000.000-7.000.000,-	5.41
	7.000.000-9.000.000 p,-	0.52
Region	>10.000.000,-	0.52
	Pekanbaru	46.39
	Kampar Regency	53.61

In terms of income, 21.39% of the respondents make less than one million rupiah per month. 27.06% gets 1-2 million rupiah per month, 38.14% earns two and half million till four million rupiah per month, 5.41% receives five to seven million rupiah, and 0.52% obtains higher than ten million rupiah per month.

Figure 1. Islamic Community or Organization that Respondents Follow/Participate



The next demographical characteristic or segmentation is the Islamic organizations that respondents follow. Most of our respondents follow

NU, comprising 38.1%. The second comes from Muhammadiyah, with 24.7%. There are also 30.9% of respondents having no affiliation with any Islamic communities or organizations.

UAS, Islam, and Ulama’s Roles in Politics

UAS’s sense of humor covering his straightforward thoughts has been an effective way to get people’s hearts and attention. 99% of our respondents know UAS, and 71.40% of them once attended his recitations/teachings. 79.40% of the respondents were actively following UAS’s lectures on Youtube and other social media. It shows that UAS has widely known not only in offline daily life but also in online platforms. As presented in the following figure, 34.8% of respondents listen to UAS’s lectures on Youtube 4–7 times a week, and 17% listen more than seven times a week. It means that most of the respondents spend their days listening to UAS, ‘no day without UAS’.

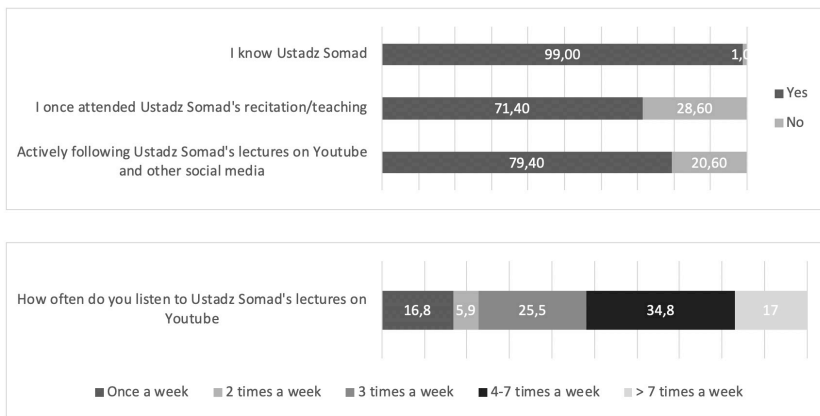


Figure 2. Interaction with UAS’s Lecture in Daily Life and Online Platforms

This intense interaction with UAS in offline and online platforms has shaped respondents’ views on their role model to be followed by Indonesian Muslims, where 52.60% responses strongly agree and 38.10% agree (90.70%). As shown in figure 3, most respondents liked/loved the Islamic lectures of UAS (90.80%). His styles representing ordinary people have made Muslims feel attached to UAS for his lectures has

given much advice to people in doing *amal ma'ruf* and *nahi munkar* (commanding the good and forbidding the evil) where 92.80% gives agreements responses for this question (see figure 3).

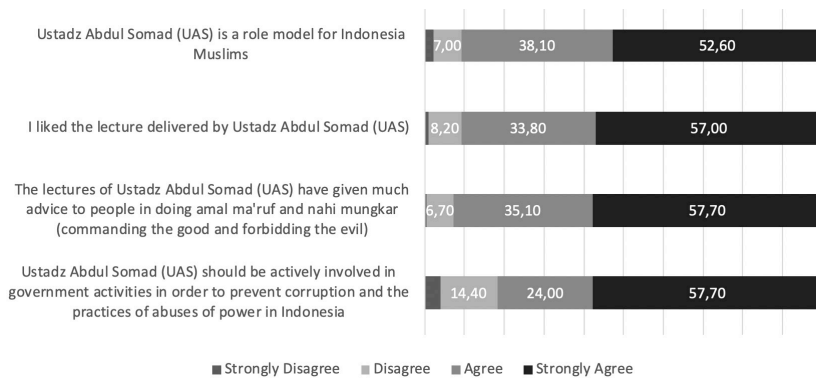


Figure 3. Perception toward UAS

57.70% strongly agree, and 24% agree (81.70%) that UAS should be actively involved in government activities to prevent corruption and the practices of abuses of power in Indonesia. With this firm agreement answer from respondents, it is understandable why there are controversies on the figure of UAS in political affairs where some politicians tried to utilize his popularity for their political and electoral gains. So it is also reasonable if his support for Prabowo candidacy that he has declared publicly drove voting behaviors among Muslims in the 2019 presidential election.

The major role of UAS was also congruent with how people perceive *ulama* or religious leaders in Muslim societies and its relations with Islam, the state, and how the state must treat *ulama*. As described in figure 4, 74.70% of respondents strongly agree, and 24.50% agree that the government must not treat Islam in such a discriminatory way. 57% of respondents strongly agree, and 40.70% agree (97.70% totals) that state or government leaders may not criminalize *ulama*. Otherwise, state leaders and government officials should listen to the inputs from *ulama* in managing the country (45.90% strongly agree, 42.30% agree).

Most of the respondents believe that *ulama* (*ustadz* and *kyai*) are figures who must be respected and listened to by Muslims.

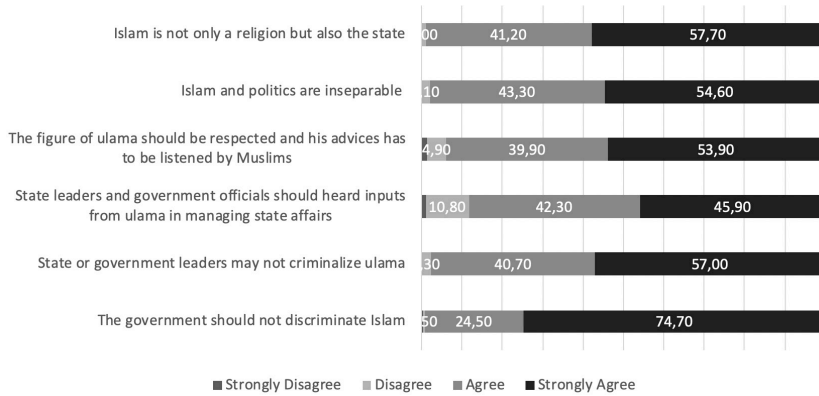


Figure 4. Perception towards *Ulama's* Role in Politics

Political Islam Preferences

The perceptions toward UAS, *ulama*, and the state based on the previous figures and explanations also have played a significant role in leading respondents' perception of political Islam preferences. Figure 5 shows to what extent Islamic orders, values, and leaders have shaped respondents' views and thoughts in determining their political preferences. 68.60% strongly agree, and 30.90% agree to consider and follow Islamic teachings and values in choosing the presidential and vice-presidential candidates. 67.30% and 28.40% also agree to vote for presidential and vice-presidential candidates who are obedient to the teachings of Islam. 67.50% and 22.90% of respondents agree to elect presidential and vice-presidential candidates supported by the *ulama* (*ustadz* and *kyai*). This is parallel with the next item, where 70.90% and 22.40% agree to select candidates who support the implementation of Islamic law as a foundation for the state and government. Furthermore, almost all respondents (98.20%) did not prefer presidential and vice-presidential candidates who were not accommodative toward Islamic teachings.

One of the most interesting findings in this study is almost all respondents (99.50%) agree to choose the presidential and vice-presidential candidates who commit to preserve the values/culture of Indonesian people and treating all religions equally. It implicitly shows that although the score on religious sentiment regarding political preferences is high, it does not make them possess a tendency to be intolerant.

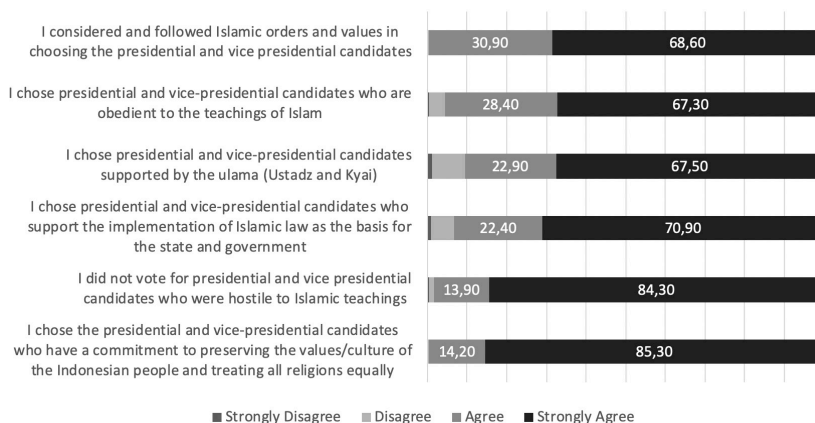


Figure 5. Preferences on Political Islam

Theoretically, in figure 5, in terms of theological perspectives, Islam is an exclusive religion with its consideration of certain aspects of life. However, from sociological perspectives, Islam is an inclusive religion that demands the government or leaders to maintain the cultural values of its nation and give equal treatment toward all religious communities.

Islam, Ulama, and UAS: The Strongest Determinant for Prabowo’s Vote Share

According to the previous explanations on the survey results, we run an index on the perception of Ulama, Islam, and the State items and an index on items of Interaction and Perception toward UAS. The indexing was to proceed with a correlation analysis with Political Islam Preference variables. The following table presents the results.

Table 3. Correlation between Preferences on Political Islam, Perception towards *Ulama's* Role in Politics, and UAS Figure.

Pearson's Correlations		Pearson's r	p
Political Islam Preference	- <i>Ulama's</i> Roles	0.580	< .001
Political Islam Preference	- UAS Figure	0.684	< .001
<i>Ulama's</i> Roles	- UAS Figure	0.653	< .001

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

We run three steps of correlation analysis. First, we analyze the perception and interaction from two variables—*Ulama's* roles and UAS Figure—where the score was positively correlated, Pearson's $r(388) = .653$, $p < .001$. This simply tells us that the higher Muslims' perception and interaction with UAS, the higher their acceptance of the roles of Islam in contemporary Indonesian politics. Next, we conducted a correlation analysis between perception toward *Ulama's* roles in politics and political Islam preference. The result also suggests a positive and statistically significant correlation between both variables, Pearson's $r(388) = .580$, $p < .001$. The last part is the analysis of UAS Index and Political Islam Preference showing a positive and statistically significant correlation between the variables, Pearson's $r(388) = .684$, $p < .001$. The following matrix presents correlational directions of all variables we analyzed.

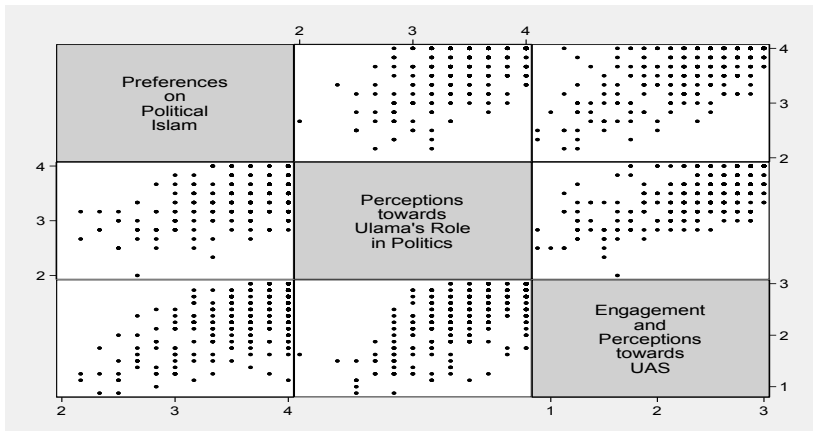


Figure 6. Correlation Matrix of Preferences on Political Islam, Perception towards *Ulama's* Role in Politics, and UAS Figure

Mujani, Liddle, and Ambardi (2018) point out that religious devoutness gives crucial incentives toward Muslim's political orientation and participation. The general trend that usually appeared is that the more religious a Muslim is, the more he/she follow religious thoughts as sources for political choices. Our survey data analysis found that Islam, *Ulama*, and UAS have a critical impact on voter's political preferences in the last election. Here, Islam matters as a critical determinant for Muslim voter behavior. In the context of widespread use of religious identity during the electoral competition, it drives Muslims to consider religious thoughts more as a primary reference in giving their electoral supports towards parties and candidates. Our first hypothesis testing confirms that political Islam has significantly elevated Prabowo's vote share in the 2019 presidential election in Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency.

As scholars who understand Islam comprehensively and adequately, *ulama* have a duty to educate and encourage Muslims to follow Islamic teachings in their daily lives. Moreover, with their intellectual capacity in Islamic thoughts, *ulama* have the authority to issue legal opinions (*fatwa*) and clarify controversial issues in Muslim society. However, the roles of *ulama* in Muslim society are in not only religious aspects but also political issues since Islam perceives there is no distinction between religion and politics. In the last election, the active participation of *ulama* (*kyai* and *ustadz*) has contributed towards shaping Muslims' political narratives. Our finding confirms descriptive explanations on *ulama's* places as primary references for Muslim voters during the election. Our statistical inference calculations prove the second hypothesis with more solid conclusions where all the computation is statistically significant where *ulama* influence political preferences of ordinary Muslims to vote for Prabowo in the 2019 presidential election in Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency.

As a popular preacher in Indonesia, UAS's Islamic lectures cover not only religious thoughts. He also elaborates his lectures with contemporary socio-political issues. Those who actively listen to his teachings/recitations on social media or attend them directly would gain knowledge on Islam and his perspective on current political development and

orientations. Consequently, he has not only attracted Muslims’ concerns on Islamic teachings but also influenced their political affairs. As a matter of fact, he also has a vast influence on Muslim political preferences in the last election. Our third hypothesis suggests UAS has weighty impacts on the significant increase of Prabowo’s vote share in the 2019 presidential election in Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency.

Table 4. Binary Logistic Regression Analyses Results

Covariates	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Political Islam Preference	1.577	.000	4.480							.773	.096	2.165
Perception toward <i>Ulama's</i> Role in Politics				1.405	.000	4.074				.182	.721	1.200
UAS Index							1.654	.000	5.227	1.106	.020	3.023
Age	-.654	.001	.520	-.581	.004	.559	-.645	.002	.525	-.700	.001	.497
Gender	-.115	.761	.891	-.256	.483	.774	.285	.488	1.330	.307	.462	1.360
Education	-.109	.560	.897	-.055	.766	.946	-.182	.332	.833	-.216	.258	.805
Income	.223	.217	1.249	0.175	.309	1.192	.184	.290	1.202	.198	.269	1.219
Constant	-1.208	.409	.299	-.652	.682	.521	.678	.591	1.970	-1.179	.492	.308
Cox & Snell R ²		.088			.070			.097			.105	
Nagelkerke R ²		.159			.127			.176			.190	

Note: Dependent Variables: Coded as “1” for Voted for Prabowo Subianto and “0” for Jokowi in 2019 Election

Based on the binary logistic regression analysis presented in table 4, the first three models are statistically significant. The three models—Political Islam Preference, Perception towards *Ulama's* Roles in Politics, and UAS Index— have a positive and significant impact on Muslims’ probability to vote for Prabowo in the 2019 election along with the age variable. Yet when all explanatory variables are grouped in the single regression model, it is UAS Index (in Model 3 and 4) having the most significant impact towards the tendency for Muslim voters to elect Prabowo, still along with the age variable. The more active a Muslim follows UAS, the higher possibility he/she to choose Prabowo. Age factor was also significant to determine Prabowo’s vote share in Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency. Younger age group respondents tend to vote for Prabowo rather than Jokowi in the last 2019 Presidential Election in Pekanbaru and Kampar. This confirms our preliminary assumption that

a significant increase of Prabowo's vote share in Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency was highly influenced by UAS. It means that in Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency "UAS Effect" was real in the last presidential election. Although there is a possibility for data generalization in the quantitative research, it is more appropriate for use in this study to conclude that the figure of UAS has mainly affected voters' behavior in Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency during the 2019 presidential election. This implicitly means that we are unable at this moment to draw a general conclusion on the findings in Riau since our primary data in this study are mainly collected from Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency.

From our findings in this study, we can say that the major trend in the national politics during the 2019 election, with a deepening religious-political polarization, has profoundly shaped the pattern of voting behavior at the local level—Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency in this case. With the rise of Islam driving political and public discourse, political contestation in the 2019 presidential election has polarized Indonesian voters into religious line, particularly the division of Muslim community—Islamists and pluralists crafting a political alliance with a religious minority (Aspinall and Mietzner 2019; Nuraniyah 2020; Warburton 2020a, 2020b). Although NU-affiliated respondents constitute the largest group in our study (see figure 1), Prabowo could instead get the dominant vote share in Riau Province, particularly Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency. An explanation for this case is because Malay composes an ethnic majority in Riau that is also the biggest group of respondents in our study. It is in line with previous studies suggesting that Jokowi's electoral advantage would prevail effectively on the districts/areas dominated by not only NU-affiliated voters but Javanese as well (Pepinsky 2019; Shofia and Pepinsky 2019).

Nonetheless, deepening polarization among voters into socio-religious cleavages is not a good sign for Indonesian democracy since it can raise socio-political tensions and conflicts. Moreover, this sharp division tends to avoid constructive mechanisms to resolve governance problems due to highly zero-sum perceptions between opposing camps, which finally reduce public confidence toward democratic norms and

institutions (McCoy, Rahman, and Somer 2018). In the most extreme case, political polarization can even lead to a democratic breakdown.

Our study also underlines the importance of sociological factors in directing voter behavior in Indonesia, especially religion. In the Indonesian case, religion—especially Islam— has been acting as a critical source that encourages political participation and drives Muslims' voting behavior (Mujani, Liddle, and Ambardi 2011, 2018; Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani 2018). This is understandable because demographically, Islam is practiced by the majority of the Indonesian population, and ideologically, it suggests that Islamic teachings consist of not only spiritual aspects but also socio-political realm. The roles of Islam as a Muslims' political preferences have mattered more since the massive mobilization of Muslim communities in the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2017 against Ahok, who was suspected of religious blasphemy at that time. From this case, Mujani (2020) reveals that Islam has become a more important consideration for Muslim's political choices rather than rational and psychological aspects of voting behavior such as evaluations on government performance and party identification. Moreover, the 2019 presidential election has been the highest reach of Islamic politics that “structures public attitudes and voting behavior,” where it finally deepens political polarization into socio-religious cleavages (Fossati 2019, 145).

The critical influence of Islam in the last election thus has provided a political stage for preachers (*ulama*) to show their influence in directing Muslim's voting behavior. In Indonesian politics, it has been such a usual condition where *ulama* are frequently approached by politicians during elections due to their ability to influence and mobilize electoral support from potential voters in favor of particular candidates. However, this trend explicitly exposes the weakness of party institutionalization in Indonesia, particularly in broad support at the grassroots. According to Indonesia Survey Institute (LSI), most Indonesian voters have low attachment or ideological affiliation toward a particular political party (Lembaga Survei Indonesia 2015). Political parties in Indonesia are generally entrapped into political personalization that relies on their

popular party figures who have ambitions to become president (Fionna 2016, Ufen 2017, Tomsa 2018). That is why, when it turns to electoral competitions, a political party often depends on clientelistic and patronage networks or seeks political endorsement from public figures, *ulama*, in this case, to collect electoral support from registered voters. This trend also contributes to Indonesian electoral democracy as merely political competitions with losing and winning calculations rather than programmatic offers from political parties that will make Indonesian democracy more substantive.

CONCLUSION

Since Indonesia has already chosen democracy as its political system to replace the authoritarian regime two decades ago, the 2019 election should be ideally a step forward to advance Indonesia's democracy to a consolidated one. This is mainly because general elections, since 1999, should be able to support the importance of democratic principles as the only rule of political games acknowledged by political actors, stronger party institutionalization, and the establishment of programmatic politics offered by political parties to voters. However, in the previous elections, religious identity, in this case, Islam, has become a critical determinant in driving voting behavior in Indonesian politics. The 2014 presidential election has been the beginning of the exploitation of religious identity for political objectives. The 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election solidified this political strategy with the fall of Ahok and the rise of Anies Baswedan.

The political mobilization of Islamic identity culminated in the 2019 election and caused intense polarization among Indonesians over political choices. Our study finds a significant influence of Islam toward voter behavior in giving their electoral votes in the last presidential election. It also emphasizes critical roles from a popular preacher—UAS—in directing Muslims' political preferences in the 2019 presidential election. Overall, the involvement of preachers (*ulama*) in the 2019 presidential election has highly contributed to the significant votes for each candidate, Jokowi and Prabowo. In our study, the figure of UAS,

supporting Prabowo candidacy, emerged as a crucial factor towards the dominance of Prabowo's electoral vote share in Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency in 2019. Thus, it makes sense that the figure of UAS is of significant influence toward political behavior of Muslim voters in Pekanbaru and Kampar Regency, where they follow UAS's political orientations as sources of reference in deciding electoral choices.

The influence of Islamic identity toward the political behavior of Muslim voters provides bigger opportunities for those who try to reach their political objectives. What they need to do is simply exploiting voter's religious sentiments for their electoral benefits of other candidates. If this trend continues in the future electoral competition, it is not a good sign for Indonesian democracy as it is currently facing stagnation and even decline (Aspinall and Mietzner 2019; Aspinall, Mietzner, and Tomsa 2015; Power and Warburton 2020). Those having intentions to run for political positions in governments only need to rely mainly on their religious or ethnic identities rather than offer appealing and realistic programs to the public. Voters do not have enough materials to judge politicians' ideas, capacity, and capability to lead because public discourses during elections are largely dominated by religious sentiments. Consequently, the people will never get decent figures to lead governments and deliver prosperity to them. As long as this case exists, there will be no improvement in the quality of Indonesian democracy. Voters should also be more aware of electoral games and political logic in Indonesia to be able to make a rational judgment in casting their votes. This is because there are no friends or enemies in politics, and politicians always serve their interests.

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