

Conference Paper

Political Influence of Kiai on Santri's Voting Behavior at the 2019 Election

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ORCID IDAkhorin Siswanto: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7237-7486>**Abstract.**

It is undeniable that *Kiai* (the leader in the Islamic boarding school) and *Santri* (the students of the Islamic boarding school) have a long history in Indonesian political dynamics. Additionally, the number of Islamic boarding schools has significantly increased. This study aimed to explain how *Kiai*'s voting behavior influenced the voting behaviour of *Santris* in the General Elections of 2019. The method used in this study was a descriptive qualitative method that involved observing a case study at the Wisma Wisnu Islamic Boarding School, Madiun. The data was analysed by using the sociological theory approach (The Columbia Study) and Rational Choice. The findings of this study showed that the voting behavior of *Kiai* in the Elections in 2019 involved rational choice. *Kiai* was able to assess the quality, competence, and integrity of the candidates through their vision, mission, and programs. Conversely, the voting behaviour of *Santri* in the election showed a sociological approach (The Colombia Study); they did not know the vision, mission, and programs of by the electoral candidates because they were not involved during the campaign stage. The *Santri* only considered and made their choices based on the guidance of their *Kiai* and parents.

Keywords: *Kiai* (the leader in Islamic boarding school); *Santri*'s (the students of the Islamic boarding school); Voting Behavior

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1. Introduction

The General Elections in 2019 were the first election held simultaneously in Indonesia. It was the election to vote for the President and Vice President, the election of the House of people's representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, the election of the Assembly provincial (DPR) of the Provincial Region, the election of the Regional House of Representatives (DPR) of regencies/cities and the election of the Regional Representative Council. Unfortunately, many problems on the ground, such as the death of election organizers, especially at the level of polling stations, could not be avoided from happening.

It is pretty perplexing as to whom the voters (especially the novice) should vote because they got five ballots of eligible participants. In this case, it surely confused

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voters, including *santri* voters in pouring out their voting rights. *Santri* are fully bound to the rules set by the *Kiai* and the boarding school. This restricts them from participating in the socialization and the campaign for election participants. The lack of knowledge about the profile, vision, and mission of election participants affects the voting behavior of *santri*.

Meanwhile, *Kiai* is seen as the most charming and highly respected by the *santri*. The roles of *Kiai* alone are as a teacher, role model, and a parent to *santri* as long as they live and study in the boarding school. *Kiai* is a charismatic leader who masters in religious matters, is knowledgeable, and has a sense of ability to read his followers(1). In this case, the followers are not only the *santri* but also the people and the society who live around the boarding school.

Kiai certainly has a high bargaining power both socially and politically. This is surely a good chance for the election participants to seek voting support. The political interaction between *Kiai* and the politicians begins and affects the *santri* in determining their votes. Nowadays, boarding schools have such a vital role in holding elections because of the *Kiai's* influence and the numbers of *santri*, so the election candidates can have support and votes from them. This is absolutely a new phenomenon happening in society and politics realm.

The interaction between *Kiai* and *santri* affects the daily life of the *santri* itself. They put high respect on the *Kiai* and are very obedient. They will follow what the *Kiai* says not only about personal matters but also about politics. The line *sami'na wa atho'na* which means "we listen and are obedient," is very familiar to the *santri*. This obedience surely affects the *santri's* voting behavior especially on the general election in 2019. It is questionable whether or not the *santri* are really obedient to the *Kiai* and have their own voting preference. However, the political influence of *Kiai* needs to be investigated further.

2. Method

This research is a qualitative descriptive using case study. The subjects and objects are described based on the fact found during the observation. The case study occurred in Wisma Wisnu Boarding School in Jerukgulung village, Balerejo district, Madiun regency. The researcher described how political direction influences *santri's* voting behavior in the general election in 2019. This research's description and elaboration were optimally analyzed using words instead of numbers. The primary data was taken from in-depth interviews, observations, and notes from related documents.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Informant Profile

TABLE 1: Informant Profile.

No	Initials	Gender	Age	Occupation
1	AKSA	Male	45	<i>Kiai</i>
2	HL	Male	40	Headmaster
3	EJ	Female	34	Teacher
4	AS	Male	26	<i>Santri</i>
5	IF	Male	24	<i>Santri</i>
6	AH	Male	24	<i>Santri</i>
7	UM	Male	23	<i>Santri</i>
8	IM	Male	23	<i>Santri</i>
9	MY	Male	24	<i>Santri</i>
10	AE	Female	22	<i>Santri</i>
11	RHI	Female	22	<i>Santri</i>

The data above is a profile of the informants involved in this study. The informants consist of *Kiai*, *Santri*, Headmaster, and the teacher.

3.2. Influence of *Kiai* on *Santri*'s

According to several interviewees' interviews, it is confirmed that the daily interactions between *Kiai* and *santri* at the Wisma Wisnu Islamic Boarding School do not run rigidly but dynamically. As mentioned in the book *ta' limulmuta' lim*, *santri* must do *ta' zim* (respect) to the teachers (*Kiai*). This is a sacred teaching that all students in boarding school must follow. Besides, there is another line *sami' nawaatho' na* (we listen and we obey) which requires students to be obedient to their *Kiai*.

This respect is not only limited to students in Islamic boarding schools but remains valid until students graduate from there and keep this mindset for their whole life. This sacredness influences their voting behavior in determining their political direction, except the 2019 general election.

In Javanese, teacher (guru-red) stands for the word *digugulanditiru*, which means people who are trusted and followed. It is like an obligation for students to follow and believe in everything that the *Kiai* orders as the teacher. The official capacity of *Kiai* as a teacher as well as acting as a parent, while the *santri* as students as well as students will certainly create a sense of obedience to the *Kiai* as a charismatic figure. Where this obedience is personally a follower to his master, *santri* are followers of the *Kiai*, so the

santri will not dare to refuse the *Kiai's* orders, as revealed in the interview with the santri above. The order here is included in determining the political choices of the students themselves.

The influence of the *Kiai* on the santri tends to run like a paternalistic relationship. Paternalistic relationship is a relationship between father and son. A son is given freedom yet rules still bind them. For instance, *Kiai* in Wisma Wisnu Boarding School gave a general overview to the santri about the candidate of legislative member and the presidential and vice-presidential candidate in general election in 2019. This description was lectured right before the santri vote in the election. Eventhough the santri are given to choose whoever they want to vote, they are not courageous enough to refuse their *Kiai's dawuh* (order). That is because they believe that *Kiai's dawuh* is sacred and if they ignore it, disaster may happen to them.

In another point of view, paternalism is defined as a social system in the family where the male line determine everything. *Kiai* is a man with high charisma, and he is respected not only by the people in the scope of the Islamic boarding school but also by his santri, followers, and the society. Partenalistic culture puts men then women as the first priority. Male santri became the main focus in determining political direction. Moreover, female santri (*santriwati*) who live in different boarding schools and Bu Nyai (*Kiai's* wife) do not get direct order from the *Kiai* to determine their votes. For some reason, they follow their parents' advice to vote for the candidate in the election. Furthermore, they strongly affirmed that they would surely follow their *Kiai's* order if they are told to.

A paternalistic culture tends to create a family environment within the organization(2) therefore, a patron always positions himself as a parent who is always right while his clients are considered as children who always have to be nurtured and guided. Clients in Islamic boarding schools refer to santri (both males and females). Therefore, they must always be guided, taught, and directed in various aspects, including determining voting behavior in th general election in 2019.

3.3. Voting Behavior

Election Commission Regulation (PKPU) Number 32 of 2018 states that there are 19 (nineteen) stages of general elections in total. Nonetheless, not all stages are open to the public, including *Kiai*. There are specific stages which the involved participants are not from public society. For instance, the registration stage is only for the political parties that will be the election candidates. The stages that *Kiai* may take part in are as the following picture:

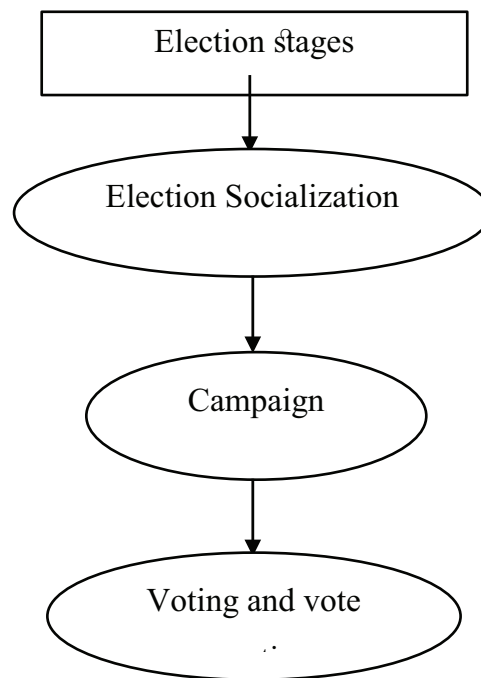


Figure 1: The election stages that *Kiai* can take part.

In general, there are three stages of elections followed by a *Kiai*: socialization, campaigning and voting. The campaign stage is used to evaluate a candidate. This will also be a differentiator with students in their involvement in the election stage. The santri are only involved in voting, while the *Kiai* is more involved especially in the campaigns carried out by the candidates. The candidates usually meet *Kiai* in person and get him involved in public meetings, conclaves, and face-to-face meetings. Sometimes, *Kiai* also becomes the spokesman of certain candidates during their campaign. Thus, a *Kiai* certainly has a more rational assessment of the candidates. By understanding the candidates' vision and mission, *Kiai* gains more information and can consider the assessment indicators for voting. A good vision and mission that has been proven or implemented through the realization of the work program will certainly be re-elected by the *Kiai*.

Some indicators commonly used by voters to assess a candidate are quality, competence and integrity. These indicators are ones of the factors of voting behavior approach(3) This statement is in line with the results of research conducted by the researcher, it shows that a *Kiai* really assesses the quality and competence of candidates through the vision and mission as well as their integrity through work programs that have been implemented.

The following is a table of voting political parties in the village of Jerukgulung, Balerejo District where the address of the Wisma Wisnu Islamic Boarding School was established.

TABLE 2: The table of votes gained by political parties in Jerukgulang Village - Balerejo District - Madiun.

Registration number of party	Political Party(ies)	Vote(s)
1	Kebangkitan Bangsa Party (PKB)	367
2	Gerakan Indonesia Raya Party (Gerindra)	34
3	Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan Party (PDIP)	621
4	Golongan Karya Party (Golkar)	78
5	Nasional Demokrat Party (Nasdem)	87
6	Gerakan Perubahan Indonesia Party (Garuda)	3
7	Beringin Karya Party (Berkarya)	10
8	Keadilan Sejahtera Party (PKS)	44
9	Persatuan Indonesia Party (Perindo)	2
10	Persatuan dan Pembangunan Party (PPP)	14
11	Solidaritas Indonesia Party (PSI)	4
12	Amanat Nasional Party (PAN)	3
13	Hati Nurani Rakyat Party (Hanura)	1
14	Demokrat Party (PD)	68
19	Bulan Bintang Party (PBB)	0
20	Keadilan dan Persatuan Indonesia Party (PKPI)	22

Source: taken from DA-1 DA-1 General Election Commission (KPU) of Madiun, 2019

The table above proved that it was not guaranteed a *Kiai* would be pro with Islamic party immediately. However, he would certainly observe and examine the nationalist-based party carefully before finally going pro with it. *Kiai* strongly influences the politics in Mataraman region since the people in society are strongly connected to each other because of belief similarity (they worship the same thereligion)(4) Therefore, Mataraman region is pro with Partai Demokrasi Indonesia/PDI (Indonesian Democratic Party) dan Golongan Karya Party.

The stages of holding the General Election consist of 19 (nineteen stages), starting from the socialization stage as the first stage until the last stage, such as taking the oath of office and inaugurating the President and Vice President. In accordance with the results of this research, it is found that the santri were only involved in voting. They are not allowed to get involved in other stages including the campaign. In fact, this campaign stage is very important stage to know the vision and mission brought by the candidate.

The campaign is the only stage for voters to know the vision, mission, program, and/or self-image of candidates in the election. By getting involved in the campaign, voters are

expected to use their votes correctly. Unfortunately, since the *santri* did not take part in the campaign, it surely affected their voting behavior.

By facing this situation, students are easily influenced by anyone in making choices, including the *Kiai*. Since they are not knowledgeable about politics, they probably made irrational votes sometimes. On the other hand, *santri* must obey and follow the *Kiai's dawuh* (order). This phenomenon then showed the voting behavior of the *santri* based on a sociological approach (the Colombia study).

4. Conclusion

The relationship between *Kiai* and *santri* is sacred. Every *santri* must *ta'zim* (respect) to the teacher (*Kiai*) and always cling onto *sami'na wa atho'na* to the *Kiai's* order. *Kiai-santri* relationship tends to be paternalistic, which means the freedom given to the children by the father yet they should be fully obedient. They must follow the rules set by the place where they live. This kind of relationship happens to the *santri* in boarding school. The *Kiai* in Wisma Wisnu boarding school used the benefit of this relationship to influence the voting behavior of the *santri* in the general election in 2019.

The voting behavior of *Kiai* in the general election in 2019 showed a rational choice approach. *Kiai* was able to assess the quality and competence of candidates by seeing the vision, mission, and integrity through their work programs that had been implemented previously. Besides, *Kiai* determined their vote by considering the result of probability that political parties would likely achieve. Other factors that influence the vote behavior of *Kiai* are the similarity in belief/religion, organization, ethnicity, family tradition, and region. Meanwhile, the vote behavior of *santri* showed a sociological approach (the Columbia study). For they were involved in the campaign, the *santri* could not figure out the vision, mission, and work programs brought by the election candidates. Therefore, their only consideration in determining the vote was based on the *Kiai's* order or parents'. This voting behavior of *santri* showed a sociological behavior model.

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