

Research Article

The Functioning of Religious Figures in the Political Sphere: Ahead of the 2024 Elections

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ORCIDDesi Erawati: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7340-7384>**Abstract.**

The 2024 elections will be a politic year in Indonesia, indicating a democratic process for its citizens. It encourages candidate pairs to seek figures known to the community, one of whom is a religious figure whose authority to the society is highly respected by the society, especially in Indonesia. This paper aims to explore how religious figures, as public figures, possess extensive knowledge, particularly in religion. This study, in the process of data analysis, employs a descriptive qualitative approach. The primary data source are several religious figures in Central Kalimantan, with the criteria of clerical figures who have a congregation/followers, at least 10 years in preaching in the community and have broad insights from various aspects and mastery of the main Islamic teachings. Based on the observations, it is evident that religious leaders, in carrying out their functions in the realm of politics/political literacy, are still few. This is evidenced by some existing religious leaders who still speak at the level of Islamic law, family/marriage issues and personal practices. Based on the observations conducted, it was shown that religious figures, in carrying out their functions in the political/literary sphere, are still few, as evidenced by some religious characters still speaking on the subject of Islamic law, family/marriage issues and practices of a personal nature.

Keywords: functionalization, religious leaders, political, electionCorresponding Author: Desi Erawati; email: desi.erawati@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id

Published 12 March 2024

Publishing services provided by Knowledge E

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Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the ICESRE Conference Committee.

1. Introduction

The religious figure became a public figure believed and respected by the society because of the appreciation for the depth of his religious science and his excellence in the development of the resources of the society also became a consultant in various issues faced. From the knowledge of a religious figure, then the religious figures are worthy to be someone enlightening hearts and minds in order to illuminate the people and to be used as an insight of the *khasanah* or role model [1].

In a country whose religious teachings are highly valued, the role of religious figures is of great importance, for example, in Indonesia, which is close to cultural and religious values. Referring to data from the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri) for 2022 it is mentioned that Indonesia has a population of 277.75 million people and according to

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its religion the majority of the Indonesian population adheres to Islam, which is 87.02 percent of the total population of Indonesia or about 241.1 million people [2]. In addition, Indonesia's Muslim population accounts for around 13.1 percent of all Muslims in the world [3].

He role of a religious figure has a significant meaning, that is, has charisma, authority and is clearly very respected by the Indonesian community. It must have had an impact when religious leaders entered the political world. The involvement of religious figures in the political sphere will be at the centre of the attention of Indonesian society. It can be seen from the 2019 presidential election, Jokowi made a decision to choose Ma'ruf Amin as his partner, that is to say, to become vice president. However, occupying a leading position as Rais Aam or the highest position in the management body of Nahdlatul Ulama figure (NU), the most prominent Islamic ormas in Indonesia [4].

Besides, the approaching 2024 elections, the presidential candidate who has already been nominated by the political party becomes a hot topic of discussion in society. A number of the names that came out in public among them, Ganjar Pranowo, Anies Baswedan, and Prabowo Subianto. A survey conducted by the National Survey Institute as of June 2023 found that 99.1 percent of respondents who are Muslims support the future president candidate of the Change Coalition for Association Anies Basweda [5]. It appears that the role of religious figures in the eyes of society is very influential in decision-making both in the religious, social, cultural spheres even in the political sphere where Geetz in his findings indicates that the existence of a balanced role of scholars in the study of religion also participates in the sphere of politics [6].

Religious figures are the source of legitimacy of various issues in society, as a starting point can be reviewed how the strategic role of religious figures in political aspects [7]. It is known jointly that religious figures have influence not only in the social-religious sphere but also in the socio-political sphere, in particular in giving advice, input and other in which it can be used as a problem solving problems universally [8]. Therefore, this article would like to provide information on how the function of religious figures in particular in the political sphere given their role and functions as a sound strategy in attracting public participation to elect existing candidate leaders. Political literacy becomes an important point understood from the internal aspects of scholarship itself so as not to be politized by certain parties.

2. Method

This paper uses a descriptive qualitative approach with literary methods as the primary data carried out, in order to obtain the required prime data from a variety of literature from both national and international articles as well as news related to the subject being studied. Further in the process of data excavation need to be subjects namely scholars in particular in Central Kalimantan with samples from some areas as representative of some regions that exist in the province of Central Kalimantan. The data analysis used is by aggregating data either through documentation, interviews and observations with the help of participants as assistant observers of the research. Then sort and select the data based on the criteria of religious/religious/kiai/dai figures who have sufficient insights and good religious, social, cultural and political views. The data is then processed and analyzed using social theory to find the expected results and finally draw a conclusion.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Results

Based on the data carried out, it was found that the function of religious figures in the political sphere is not fully functioning properly, as evidenced by the existence of themes of the content of lectures still within the scope of personal worship, matters of marriage and its scope, as well as daily practices. If speaking of the function of religious figures in society is very helpful in providing services, support and problem solver especially in household matters. Such religious figures usually exist in rural or suburban areas, whereas religious leaders in urban areas, their role and functions as policymakers in religious matters are highly needed, based on the data that has been done. The function of urban religious figures is very helpful in providing Islamic enlightenment both in the area of personal worship, household issues, and others. Political studies are given only at specific times and very rarely delivered among urban communities even in the countryside.

3.2. Discussion

Indonesia is a country with a democratic system of government. It's closely related to political parties and general elections. Elections are the arena of struggle for political parties, while political parties use elections to gain power in government. Syamsuddin

Haris said that political parties and elections are not accessories to government, but their existence is a must in the political systems of democracy for the development of a democratic country [9]. In order to ensure that a government can conduct good elections, it is necessary to guide the standardization of elections that is universally valid. Emphasis on legal-formal aspects becomes a very important rule of play to observe [10].

More deeply related to the political campaign, it has become one of the cultural and essential aspects of the process ahead of the general election. Campaigns become a way to educate the community as well as a bridge to build cohesion in the community. Further, the campaign was conducted to introduce the candidates in order to gain the vote of the people and to victory [11]. Thus, the need for a role-playing figure that can be the foundation of society so that people can be educated to be intelligent voters and not to engage in anti-social movements ahead of the elections [12].

The Indonesian people are well known for their religious side, as evidenced by the results of a survey conducted by the Global Business Policy Institute and CEOWORLD magazine [13]. Therefore, the figure of religious figures became a role model viewed and highly respected by Indonesian society. The role of religious figures is to appeal to goodness and to avoid prohibitions according to religious orders [8]. The attitude and scholarship of religious figures became one of the guidelines held by society to conduct its daily life. Religious figures become a public vessel to talk about religious teachings and all aspects of life, without exception in political and general election topics.

The contest of the general electorate must not be excluded from the role of religious figures. Religious figures are often targeted by politicians in building the basis of political support. Furthermore, religious figures play a crucial role in increasing public participation in the exercise of their voting rights. Religious figures become part of a political elite that has a strategic position and is judged to have a position of power to unite diverse peoples [14,15]. The figures of religious figures can be said to be one of the political pillars to highlight the political eligibility itself with the aim of capturing the voices of the people [16]. In this case, the importance of religious figures have knowledge of political science and can educate the public about the general election.

According to data from the Ministry of Islamic Religion of Central Kalimantan Province, there are 1,775 Islamic religious figures spread out in 14 districts/cities in Central Kalimantan province [17]. Based on the results of research related to the inventory of religious/religious figures that are present in Central Kalimantan with a categorization of the duration of devotion of at least ten years, with the age of over forty years, in which the figures have a guest house or a memorable assembly as well as there

are results of monumental works that have been made detected about a total of 103 religious/religious/religious characters that are in the Central Kalimantan [18].

It is well known that together with the role of religious figures in the empowerment of the people, it has been demonstrated that the existence of hegemony of leadership can survive through the channels of the religious institutions, education, society and social media [19]. It is not only happening in other developed countries but also in Indonesia it is seen that some of these channels become strategic targets in influencing, educating the public in the hope of gaining the sympathy and confidence of the full of the public [20]. The role of religious figures should be multifunctional as decision makers in society, not only providing enlightenment on religious aspects such as theological studies, fiqh, morality and other morals but also in the political sphere not to be forgotten, because caring, protecting the country from iniquity is also a religious command. A safe and peaceful country depends on its leaders and citizens, then there needs to be support or construction to the people about how to live as a nation and as a country.

4. Conclusion

As answers related to the function of religious figures in Central Kalimantan can be categorized several parts, first, traditionalist scholars look from the fields of studies presented such as Islamic law, household problems, education and poverty, this usually happens in the areas of rural society or middle down society. From this category, if seen from its functions, it is still in nature to respond to the practical needs of the questions of the surrounding society. While the second category of religious figures is moderate or inclusive, where the themes given are partly the same as before but there are some religious characters who provide Islamic political studies proven in urban and upper-middle society with the majority of professions of teachers, lecturers, other office workers. From this category it is proven that there are some inclusive religious figures performing their functions of providing socialization of political literature in Muslim society but this is not all of the included religious characters.

Acknowledgements

This article still has many limitations, because what is studied is the function of religious figures, especially in the political realm, as a form of community readiness ahead of the 2024 simultaneous elections. Religious figures become public figures for what is happening especially in Central Kalimantan. With all humility, I would like to express

my gratitude to the Central Kalimantan province's MUI who has given support to this research data, as well as the religious/religious/dai figures in 14 districts/cities, so that they can provide information about how religious figures function in the political sphere of Islam in society. I would also like to thank the Ministry of Religion of both the provinces, districts and cities that have facilitated the completion of this writing.

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