

The Influence of Islamic Identity Politics on Thought Patterns and Social Life in the Perception of Gen Z

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Abstract

This study aims to explore Gen Z's perceptions of Islamic identity politics in Indonesia and its impact on their mindset and social life. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method of 62 respondents, the majority of whom are students. Data were collected through a Likert-based questionnaire designed to measure respondents' understanding and views on identity politics. The results showed that 43.5% of respondents considered Islamic identity politics to have the potential to divide society, while 51.6% of respondents considered the use of religious symbols in political campaigns to be quite effective. In addition, 77.5% of respondents acknowledged the major role of social media in shaping their views. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistical methods, which showed a significant relationship between identity politics and Generation Z's mindset and social life. This is manifested by the important role of a more inclusive approach in religious-based political policies in Indonesia. This finding is able to reflect how the younger generation is increasingly aware of complex social and political issues and shows their tendency to assess religious issues more rationally and openly. Therefore, this study provides an important contribution in understanding the dynamics of identity politics from the perspective of the younger generation who will be the main actors in the future of Indonesian democracy.

Keywords: Gen Z perception; Islamic identity politics; political campaign

1. Introduction

Identity politics has emerged as an important phenomenon in the Indonesian political landscape, especially in the last few decades. The strategic use of religious identities, especially Islam, in political campaigns has attracted a lot of attention and generated various reactions from the public. This discourse is especially relevant when considering younger generations, especially Generation Z (Gen Z), characterized by digital birth and global education. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z has a different perspective on politics, religion, and social life, so it is important to understand their perceptions of identity politics, especially those rooted in religious affiliation.

This understanding is very important to anticipate the future trajectory of Islamic politics in Indonesia and its implications for social dynamics among youth (Hanan, 2020; Lubis et al., 2024; Suhariyanto, 2024).

In Indonesia, identity politics often manifests itself through the use of religious symbols and narratives to influence public opinion and gain electoral support. This trend is particularly visible during elections, where candidates often leverage religious identity to increase their appeal. However, there is a significant research gap regarding Gen Z's response to this phenomenon. It remains unclear whether they view Islamic identity politics as a legitimate expression of their beliefs or as a manipulative tactic used by political actors. Given their increasing critical awareness of social and political issues, Gen Z's perspective may differ significantly from that of older generations (Fauzan et al., 2024; Miichi, 2014; Shadiqi, M., Muluk, H., & Milla, 2018). This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating Gen Z's perceptions of Islamic identity politics and its impact on their values and social interactions.

The concept of identity politics can be understood as a political strategy that mobilizes certain identities—such as religion, ethnicity, or race—to form political coalitions and gain support. In the context of Islamic politics in Indonesia, this strategy has developed into a major theme in many electoral campaigns. The implications of this trend are varied, contributing to increased social tensions and potential conflict among religious communities. Understanding how Gen Z views Islamic identity politics actors is crucial to understanding the broader implications of this phenomenon on their social mindset and behavior (Ahmad et al., 2023; Arjon, 2018; Kurniawan & Alhaq, 2020). This study seeks to explain these perceptions and their consequences for Gen Z's social interactions and worldview.

The importance of this research extends to the broader context of democratic development in Indonesia. By gaining insight into Gen Z's views on Islamic identity politics, this study can shed light on future political dynamics and the younger generation's potential influence on political and social trajectories. As future leaders of the nation, Gen Z's attitudes towards religion and politics will play an important role in shaping the evolution of identity politics in Indonesia. Furthermore, this understanding can be the basis for efforts to promote inclusiveness and pluralism in Indonesian politics, which can serve as a guide for politicians and policy makers in crafting more effective and ethical political messages (Lindner, 2024; Lubis et al., 2024; Pramono et al., 2023).

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on Gen Z, a demographic group at the peak of its productive potential, characterized by different characteristics and mindsets compared to previous generations. Unlike previous research that has broadly examined public responses to identity politics, this research specifically targets groups that are more technologically connected and critically engaged with global issues. This research also highlights the social consequences of identity politics on Gen Z's interaction patterns and perspectives, offering a new angle to view the influence of identity politics on the political and social lives of the younger generation. (Hidayah, 2012; Wahyudi et al., 2022).

In conclusion, an exploration of Gen Z's perceptions of Islamic identity politics is not only timely but also important for understanding the evolving political landscape in Indonesia. This demographic group's unique characteristics and critical engagement with social issues positions them as important players in shaping the future of identity politics in the country.

2. Method

This research uses a quantitative research design to investigate Gen Z's perceptions of Islamic identity political actors in Indonesia. A quantitative approach is very suitable for this research because it allows objective measurement of perceptions and thought patterns through data collected from respondents using standard instruments. This methodology facilitates the identification of relationships between the variables under study and allows statistical hypothesis testing. The main method of data collection used in this research is a survey, which is equipped with descriptive and inferential statistical analysis to interpret the findings (Mashud, M., Ida, R., & Saud, 2022; Wahyuningroem et al., 2024).

The research subjects consisted of 62 Gen-Z survey respondents, strategically selected from various locations. To increase the reach of the research, data collection was also carried out online, which allowed the inclusion of respondents outside the campus environment. Subject selection was carried out through deliberate sampling, targeting individuals who fit the Gen Z demographic and had an interest or awareness of Islamic politics and identity issues in Indonesia. This approach ensures that the data collected is relevant to the research objectives and reflects the perspective of the target population (Ida, R., Saud, M., & Mashud, 2020; Merrilees et al., 2014).

Table 1. Operational Research Concept Variable Perception of Gen Z towards Islamic Identity Politics Actors in Indonesia

Indicator	Question	No	Scale
Level of understanding of Islamic identity politics	How familiar are you with the concept of Islamic identity politics?	1	likert
Effectiveness of using religious symbols in political campaigns	In your opinion, is the use of religious symbols (such as the hijab, turban, mosque) in political campaigns effective in gaining support?	2	likert
Impact of Islamic identity politics on social unity or division	Do you think Islamic identity politics tends to strengthen unity or divide society?	3	likert
	Do you feel that Islamic identity politics affects your social relationships with people who hold different views?	4	likert
Influence of Islamic identity politics on political preferences and social choices	How does Islamic identity politics influence your political choices?	5	likert
	What is your opinion of politicians who use religion as a tool in political campaigns?	6	likert
Influence of social media on perspectives regarding Islamic identity politics	How often do you see religion being used in political campaigns in Indonesia?	7	likert
	Does social media influence your views on Islamic identity politics?	8	likert
Expectations regarding the role of Islamic politics in the future	Do you think Islamic identity politics diverts attention from other important issues such as the economy or social justice?	9	likert
	What are your hopes for the role of Islamic politics in Indonesia in the future?	10	Essay

Data collection relies on a structured questionnaire featuring closed-ended questions and a Likert scale to effectively measure respondents' perceptions and thinking patterns. The questionnaire was carefully designed to ensure clarity and validity of the content. Ethical considerations were paramount in this research; respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of the confidentiality of their personal information. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, in line with ethical research practices (Ida, R., Saud, M., & Mashud, 2020).

The research methodology includes several main steps: distributing questionnaires, collecting data, and analyzing the results using a survey research approach. The quantitative data obtained was subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical analysis to identify trends and correlations between Gen Z perceptions and issues related to identity politics. The results of the analysis are interpreted to answer research questions and provide insight into the mindset and social life of respondents (Miichi, 2014; Yasdin et al., 2023).

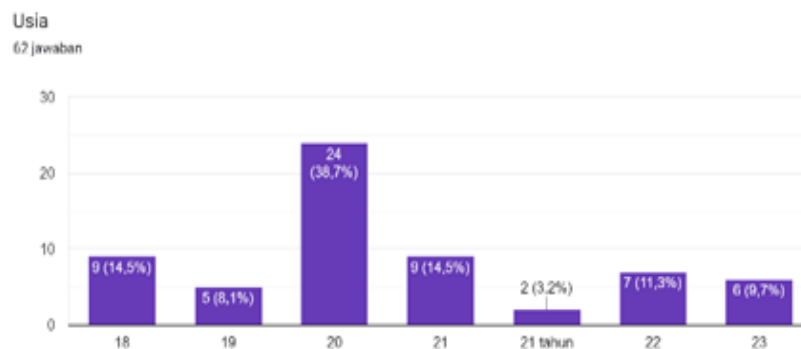
The novelty of this research lies in its focus on Gen Z, a digital generation characterized by a different mindset compared to previous groups, especially regarding Islamic identity politics in Indonesia. This research aims to fill the gap in existing literature regarding the impact of identity politics on the social lives of young people, a topic that has not been widely explored in the Indonesian context (Fuad, 2024; Iqbal Zubaidi, 2024; Syarif & Hannan, 2020).

In conclusion, this research's quantitative design and focus on Gen Z's perceptions of Islamic identity politics actors provide valuable insight into the evolving political landscape in Indonesia. By understanding this demographic perspective, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the interaction between identity politics and youth engagement in socio-political fields.

3. Result and Discussion

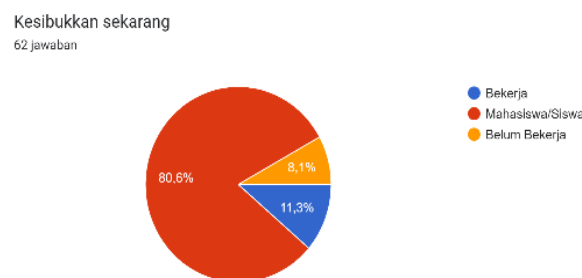
3.1. Respondent Characteristics

In this study, there were 62 respondents from various age groups, with the majority aged 20 to 21 years. A total of 24 respondents (38.7%) were 20 years old and 11 respondents (17.7%) were 21 years old, indicating that the majority were in a transition phase towards adulthood, where they actively formed social and political views. In addition, there were 7 respondents (11.3%) aged 22 years, 5 respondents (8.1%) aged 19 years, 9 respondents (14.5%) aged 18 years, and 6 respondents (9.7%) aged 23 years. This age diversity provides insight into how social background influences respondents' political views and attitudes.



Picture 1. Respondent age

In the group of 62 respondents, the majority had student or student status. A total of 50 respondents (80.6%) identified themselves as students or students, indicating dominant involvement in formal education. This reflects their focus on self-development through education. Meanwhile, 7 respondents (11.3%) have entered the world of work, indicating that some have started their careers even though they are still in the educational stage. In addition, 5 respondents (8.1%) were not yet employed, which may reflect that they were looking for work or focusing on studies. This diversity provides insight into how education and employment status influence views and attitudes toward social and political issues.



Picture 2. Respondent Activities

3.2. Discussion

Based on data from 62 respondents, variations were found in understanding Islamic identity politics. A total of 25 respondents said they were "familiar" with this concept, while 21 felt they were "less familiar," reflecting limited knowledge. On the other hand, 16 respondents self-identified as "very familiar," indicating deeper engagement. This finding is in line with the literature, where (Zaduqisti et al., 2020) states that Islamic political moderation can increase tolerance, while (Mukrimin, 2012) underlines the relationship between Islamic political understanding and individual perceptions of politics. (Mikail et al., 2023) said that the importance of understanding the dynamics of civil Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia in the context of identity politics. In addition, (Fitri et al., 2023) shows the role of social media such as Instagram in shaping Gen Z's political behavior, which is closely related to the level of familiarity with Islamic identity politics. In conclusion, although most of Gen Z has a good understanding, there is still a need to improve identity politics education among those less familiar with this topic.

Based on the opinions of 62 respondents, the majority had a positive view of the use of religious symbols in political campaigns. In particular, 32 respondents considered the use of symbols such as the hijab, turban, and mosque "quite effective," indicating that these symbols can attract public support, although not very much. Additionally, 18 respondents rated these symbols as "very effective," believing that religious symbols play an important role in shaping voter preferences. In contrast, 12 respondents felt this strategy was "not very effective," reflecting a minority view. Overall, the data shows a generally positive perception of religious symbols in the campaign, while some members of the public remain skeptical about their impact. This finding is in line with literature discussing the role of religious symbols in political behavior, (Leira et al., 2023; Zeng et al., 2020) said that how religious identity can influence political engagement. Additionally (Castle et al., 2017; Zaluchu et al., 2019) emphasizes the increasing trend of candidates using religious symbols to connect with voters, especially in contexts like Indonesia where religion is highly political affiliation.

Based on data from 62 respondents, the majority rarely observe the use of religion in political campaigns in Indonesia. Specifically, 22 respondents (35.5%) stated that they had never seen religious symbols used in campaigns, while 11 respondents (17.7%) rarely observed this. Additionally, 13 respondents (21%) reported occasional exposure, and 11 respondents (17.7%) noted that they frequently see religious symbols in political campaigns. Only 5 respondents (8.1%) stated that they often encountered religion in a political context. These findings suggest that the use of religion in political campaigns is considered relatively rare, although some respondents reported more frequent encounters with religious symbolism in the political arena. This is in line with (Sahlan, 2023), who notes that although the use of religion in political campaigns may not always be overt, it remains a significant undercurrent in Indonesian politics. In addition, (Bilodeau et al., 2018) said how public opinion about religious symbols can shape political behavior, emphasizing cultural and political context as a major factor (Ribberink et al., 2013) also suggests that secularization trends can affect the visibility and acceptance of religious symbols in political campaigns.

Based on data from 62 respondents, 27 respondents believed that Islamic identity politics tended to divide society, indicating concerns about its impact on social harmony. However, 24 respondents felt that it strengthened unity, indicating that some saw it as a means to foster solidarity among like-minded individuals. In addition, 11 respondents considered it to have no significant impact on the unity or division of society, reflecting a neutral

attitude. Overall, while some respondents viewed Islamic identity politics positively or neutrally, the prevailing perception was that it was divisive. This is in line with (Zadugisti et al., 2020), who highlight that while Islamic political moderation can encourage tolerance and reconciliation, identity politics can also divide society (Mikail et al., 2023) discussing the dual nature of Islamic identity in Indonesia, in where religious identity can both unite and divide. Likewise, (Abduljaber, 2018) explores how identity politics can create divisions in society, reinforcing the complexity of this issue in both national and regional contexts.

The analysis of the impact of Islamic identity politics on respondents' political preferences reveals significant variations. Among the 62 respondents, a majority acknowledged that Islamic identity politics shaped their political preferences, with 18 respondents considering it "influential" and 16 assessing it as "somewhat influential." These findings indicate that identity politics is a relevant factor for many individuals in their decision-making processes. However, 12 respondents stated that Islamic identity politics had no influence, suggesting they prioritized other factors such as policies or socio-economic issues. Additionally, 16 respondents viewed Islamic identity politics as "very influential," underscoring that for some, religious identity plays a pivotal role in their political choices.

These results highlight that, despite varying perspectives, most respondents recognize the relevance of Islamic identity politics in shaping their political behavior. This aligns with (Hidayah, 2012) who argued that religion has historically shaped political identity in Indonesia. Similarly (Sipa et al., 2021) emphasized the symbolic power of religious identity in political campaigns.

The influence of Islamic identity politics extends to social relationships. Out of 62 respondents, 22 reported that it "influenced" their social interactions, implying that differing political views tied to religious identity could affect relationships. Meanwhile, 14 respondents felt the impact was minimal, and 10 stated it had no effect on their social relationships. Notably, 16 respondents indicated that Islamic identity politics "significantly influenced" their social interactions, suggesting that religion-influenced political differences could create tension or friction in social contexts.

These findings underscore the potential divisive effects of Islamic identity politics in both political and social spheres. This is consistent with arguments that the intertwining of Islam and politics can lead to both unity

and division (Syarif et al., 2020) further highlighted how contemporary political narratives can provoke tensions related to identity politics, particularly in the context of Islamophobia and post-truth politics.

Respondents' views regarding politicians who use religion as a political campaign tool show a diversity of attitudes. The majority of respondents, namely 24 people, expressed a "neutral, depending on context" attitude. This suggests that many respondents do not see the use of religion in political campaigns as intrinsically negative or positive, but rather depending on how and in what context it is used. In contrast, 20 respondents rejected the use of religion in political campaigns, stating that this practice felt "manipulative", reflecting concerns that religion might be exploited for political gain which could undermine public trust in religious values (Mukrimin, 2012). Additionally, 18 respondents supported the use of religion in political campaigns, as long as it is "done wisely." This shows that there are groups who believe that religion can be used positively in campaigns, as long as it is carried out honestly and without deception (Zaduqisti et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, survey results regarding the influence of social media on respondents' views regarding Islamic identity politics show that social media plays a significant role in shaping their views. A total of 28 respondents stated that social media "influenced" their views, while 20 respondents felt that social media "really influenced" their opinions. However, there were 13 respondents who stated that social media "didn't really influence it" and 1 respondent said it "didn't influence it at all". This shows that although social media has an important role in providing information and forming opinions, some individuals remain critical and are not fully influenced by the content they encounter on these platforms (Sahlan, 2023). The use of social media in the context of Islamic identity politics, as explained by (Zaduqisti et al., 2020), allows the spread of diverse ideas, but also has the potential to spread misinformation, exacerbate polarization, and increase social tensions. (Pribadi, 2022).

Survey results regarding respondents' views on whether Islamic identity politics divert attention from other important issues such as the economy or social justice show a clear trend. The majority of respondents, namely 37 people, agreed, while 19 respondents strongly agreed, and only 6 respondents disagreed. This view reflects concerns that excessive focus on Islamic identity politics may obscure other equally important issues. Issues such as economics and social justice are often overlooked when public attention is focused too much on identity struggles or religious ideologies. However, identity politics

cannot be considered completely negative, because it can provide a forum for fighting for the rights and interests of certain groups. However, if it is too dominant, this can cause polarization and hinder cooperation in resolving broader problems, such as poverty and economic injustice (Mukrimin, 2012; Zaduqisti et al., 2020).

Expectations regarding the future political role of Islam reflect the public's desire to see wise integration between religious values and political practice. Many respondents hope that Islamic identity politics will not mix religious issues with political interests, because the two have different roles. They hope that political actors will be wiser in conveying their political identity and not only use religion to gain support (Pribadi, 2022). Politicians are expected to uphold integrity and accountability, and focus on relevant social issues, such as poverty and social justice. In this way, it is hoped that Islamic politics can contribute positively to strengthening inclusive democracy and maintaining harmony between religious communities (Sahlan, 2023).

4. Conclusion

This research aims to identify and understand Gen Z's perceptions of perpetrators of Islamic identity politics in Indonesia and its impact on their mindset and social life. Based on the results of a survey involving 62 respondents around the UPI campus, other campuses, and through online media, this research found that the majority of respondents had a critical view of religion-based identity politics. Respondents consider that Islamic identity politics is often used for certain political interests, which has a negative impact on social cohesion and diversity. These findings also show that Gen Z, as a generation that is accustomed to digital information and social media, tends to have a high awareness of political dynamics, but is also more skeptical of efforts to politicize religion. Apart from that, there is a significant difference in mindset between respondents who are exposed to more information through online media and those who are less exposed.

However, this study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the limited scope of respondents to campus areas and online environments may cause geographic or demographic bias in research findings. Second, data collection methods that rely on survey questionnaires can limit the depth of information obtained, because respondents are only given limited answer choices that may not fully reflect their views or experiences in more detail. Therefore, for further research, it is recommended to use qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews or focus group discussions (FGD) to obtain a richer perspective. In addition, expanding the geographic and

demographic reach of respondents is also important so that research results are more representative and relevant on a national scale.

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