Social Identity and Political Preferences of First-Time Voters in the 2024 Presidential Election

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ABSTRACT

Reaching voters in presidential elections frequently involves using identity politics. On the other side, first-time voters might serve as prospective targets for gaining supporters. The purpose of this study is to investigate the link between first-time voters' choices for presidential candidates and the social identities (faith, gender, and ethnicity) of presidential candidates. The main theory used to explain the relationship between social identity and political choice preferences is Social Identity Theory. This study is a quantitative survey that looks at the relationship between political candidates' social identities and the preferences of first-time voters in Indonesia in 2023. The findings of the study indicate a connection between the presidential and vice-presidential candidates' social identities and the decisions made by first-time voters. For instance, the political choices of first-time voters are directly correlated with their gender, notably whether they will accept or approve of female presidents and vice presidents. The findings of the study indicate that first-time voters are open to electing a female president. An interesting finding to highlight is how new voters tend to be open to the choice of president and vice president of other religions. The majority of first-time voters (respondents) accept presidents and vice presidents who belong to minority religions such as Catholics, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Confucians, and local religions.

Keywords : Social Identities, Firs-time Voters, Presidential Election

INTRODUCTION

In 2024, specifically on February 14, Indonesia will hold its largest political event, a simultaneous general election aimed at electing members of legislative bodies, including the Regency/City DPRD, Provincial DPRD, House of Representatives (DPR RI), Regional Representatives Council (DPD), and the president and vice president.

Since 2004, elections have been held directly, with voters choosing candidates by name rather than just political parties. This direct election system means that the selection of legislative members and the president/vice president is not solely determined by political parties. The direct election system intensifies competition for votes, as each candidate campaigns primarily to gain the people's trust. Candidates employ a variety of strategies, tactics, and media to build a positive image while steering public perception to distrust opposing candidates' campaigns. This ranges from negative and black campaigns to tactics of terror/intimidation and persecution. Such "win-at-all-costs" approaches, including identity politics, manifest in provocative information that often takes the form of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation—commonly known as hoaxes.

Conceptually, a hoax is understood as false, inaccurate information crafted to appear true (Ireton & Posetti, 2018). While some people may recognize that certain information is unverified, repeated exposure can turn falsehoods into perceived truth. In the digital age, hoaxes are easily produced and distributed via social media due to its open, anonymous nature, with no boundaries of time and space.

The abundance of information—some of it questionable (hoaxes) in digital spaces—makes it difficult, particularly for first-time voters, to distinguish between verified information and hoaxes (Aminah & Sari, 2019). A new group has even emerged that consistently spreads hoaxes, often in the form of sensitive SARA (ethnic, religious, racial, and inter-group) issues, which is highly sensitive for Indonesia's diverse society. Unverifiable information is produced solely for capital gain without considering its social impact, as exemplified by the Saracen group (Holik, 2018).

Berger & Milkman (cited in Struhar, 2014) explain that content shared via social media often evokes emotional responses, either positively or negatively. The impact of hoaxes on first-time voters is that they find it difficult to differentiate between true information and hoaxes, often leading to provocation, resentment, and shifts in political support (Aminah & Sari, 2019). This is partly due to the fact that first-time voters are in late adolescence, a psychologically unstable stage, making them more susceptible to provocation.

Identity politics veiled with hoaxes and hate speech is highly intimidating and tends to undermine the rationality and wisdom of first-time voters in their political participation in the 2024 direct elections. An incomplete understanding, not based on facts and prone to subjective emotion, results in unclear decision-making when choosing representatives and presidential candidates. In past elections, such as the DKI Jakarta governor election, identity politics proved to be an easy "tool" to enhance or destroy a candidate's image. Diversity, initially seen as a shared asset, has been turned into a political gap. Social identities like religion, ethnicity, place of origin, gender, social status, educational affiliation, and organizational ties are then shaped into political capital, forming the basis of identity politics to appeal to potential voters.

Conceptually, identity politics is a political strategy that emphasizes differentiation and the exploitation of primordial ties as its main category (Heller & Riekmann in Rozi, 2019). Broadly, identity politics is understood as using shared identities—such as ethnicity, origin, gender, religion, and social class—to advance the interests of a particular social group (Widjaja et al., 2020). Identity politics often features narratives of past oppression, marginalization, or exclusion, which become the foundation of a social group's struggle (Lawler, 2014).

This research aims to examine the relationship between the social identities (religion, gender, ethnicity) of political candidates and the preferences of first-time voters regarding political candidates.

The simultaneous general election holds a significant potential to trigger political polarization by pitting various social identities within society against one another. Candidates are likely to employ identity politics strategies, using social media platforms to win the support of first-time voters. Political-themed photos, videos, memes, and links will flood Facebook feeds throughout 2023. Facebook is a social media platform frequently used by first-time voters to obtain election-related information. However, hoaxes disseminated via Facebook have been shown to impact the attitudes of first-time voters, as seen in Aceh Jaya (Aminah & Sari, 2019).

From the perspective of first-time voters, social identity also plays a role in political preferences. A study conducted by Astrika & Yuwanto (2019) illustrated the influence of social identity on the electability of candidates for the Governor of Central Java for the 2018–2023 period. Among the 92 sample voters, 24% would choose a candidate from the same region, while 76% would not. Additionally, 31% would vote for a candidate of the same religion, while 69% would not. Furthermore, 34% of respondents indicated a preference for candidates of the same gender, while 66% did not. Although

the proportion of respondents choosing candidates with a similar social identity as themselves is smaller, it remains statistically significant. This demonstrates that social identity still plays a role in voters' decision-making.

Identity is a socially constructed concept, making it difficult to define. Tracy (in Samovar et al., 2017) explains that identity is both inclusive and contradictory. According to Tracy, identity is best understood as a stable aspect of each individual that precedes certain situations, while simultaneously serving as a dynamic construct that is enacted and modified through discourse across different contexts. Ting-Toomey similarly emphasizes inclusivity, viewing identity as a reflective self-conception or self-image shaped by family, gender, culture, ethnicity, and socialization processes. Identity essentially refers to our self-reflective views and how others perceive our self-image.

The main theoretical framework used to explain the relationship between social identity and political preferences is Social Identity Theory. This theory posits that social identity constitutes part of an individual's self-concept derived from their affiliation with specific groups, such as gender, religion, race/ethnicity (Tajfel in Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). Such affiliations foster emotional and value-based attachments to the group. Furthermore, group membership creates a social identity that categorizes individuals into in-groups and establishes an out-group perception for those outside their group. This identification often leads to favoritism toward in-group members and shapes preferences accordingly.

This study employs a quantitative survey approach to examine the relationship between the social identities of political candidates and the voting preferences of first-time voters in Indonesia in 2023. The independent variables in this research include aspects of social identity, such as gender, religion, and race/ethnicity. The study aims to determine the relationship between these independent variables and the preferences of first-time voters.

The study population consists of first-time voters for the 2024 general election, with sample coverage across Indonesia's three time zones, based on a quota sample derived from provincial populations in Western, Central, and Eastern Indonesia (including Aceh, North Sumatra, West Sumatra, Riau, Riau Islands, Jambi, South Sumatra, Lampung, Bangka Belitung, Bengkulu, Jakarta, Banten, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, West and Central Kalimantan in Western Indonesia; North Kalimantan, East and South Kalimantan, Bali, West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, West, Central, South, Southeast, North Sulawesi, and Gorontalo in Central Indonesia; and Maluku, North Maluku, Papua, West Papua, South Papua, Central Papua, Papua Highlands, and Southwest Papua in Eastern Indonesia).

The study sample comprised 543 individuals, determined based on a

total estimated number of 428,799 first-time voters (aged 16–21) for the 2024 election (Kompas.com, 2022). Sample size calculations, with a population of 428,799 at a 95% confidence level and a 5% confidence interval, yielded a minimum sample size of 384. Responses to the survey, drawn from questions based on previous theories and studies, served as primary data for this research. Self-administered questionnaires required respondents to provide written answers to predetermined questions. Data was also collected through literature reviews of relevant studies, books, data, and materials on social identity and political preferences. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS software for associative statistics and Chi-Square tests. The study's internal validity hinges on the quality of the instruments used and the theoretical and empirical grounding of previous studies applied in this research.

What is being tested is whether the social identity of first-time voters, namely gender, ethnicity, and religion, influences the election of president and vice president in the 2024 general elections.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on a survey conducted with 543 first-time voters in Indonesia, aged 17-21 and registered on the permanent voter list for the 2024 election, originating from 23 provinces representing three regions in Indonesia—Western Indonesia, Central Indonesia, and Eastern Indonesia—the demographic distribution of the data can be explained as follows: The descriptive data of the respondents in percentages (%) are as follows :

Table 1. Respondent Demographics

Demographics	1. Frequency (N =543)	Demographics	Frequency (N =543)
Gender (%)		Province of Origin (%)	
Female	61	Bali	4.4
Male	39	Banten	1.5
		Bengkulu	5.0
		Special Region of Yogyakarta	5.0
		Special Capital Region of Jakarta	3.9
		West Java	10.1
		Central Java	13.8
		East Java	7.2

Table 1. Respondent Demographics (lanjutan)

Demographics	Frequency (N =543)	Demographics	Frequency (N =543)	Demographics
Level of Education (%)		South Kalimantan	3.7	
High School (SMA), Vocational School (SMK), and State Islamic High School (MAN)	25.4	East Kalimantan	3.7	
Higher Education and equivalent	74.6	Lampung	0.2	
		Maluku	4.0	
		North Maluku	2.9	
		Nangroe Aceh Darussalam	1.0	
		West Nusa Tenggara	3.1	
		East Nusa Tenggara	3.9	
		Papua	3.1	
Religion (%)		Riau	1.6	
Islam	72.4	South Sulawesi	4.6	
Christian	16.6	North Sulawesi	3.9	
Catholic	6.4	West Sumatera	5.3	
Hindu	4.4	North Sumatera	7.3	
Buddha	0.2	South Sumatera	0.8	

Source: Research Data Processing Results

Hypothesis Testing. This study aims to test whether there is a relationship between social identity and the political preferences of first-time voters in the 2024 presidential and vice-presidential election. The social identity variables used are gender and religion, while the political preference variable is defined as the acceptance or rejection of presidential and vice-presidential candidates with certain social identities (specific gender, religion and ethnicity).

There are three hypotheses proposed by researchers, namely: H1: There is relationship between respondents' gender identity and their preference for presidential and vice-presidential candidates (with certain gender). H2: There is relationship between respondents' religion identity and their preference for presidential and vice-presidential candidates (with particular religion)

H3: There is relationship between respondents' ethnicity identity and their preference for presidential and vice-presidential candidates (with certain ethnicity). H4 : There is relationship between respondents' religious identity and their preference for female presidential and vice-presidential candidates. H5 : There is relationship between gender identity and the political preference for a Muslim president-vice president

In more detail, operationally to explain the concepts of gender, religion and ethnicity, researchers only included gender based on the binary differences between men and women, did not include other genders. For religion, it refers to the Indonesian government's policy of recognizing six religions, namely Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism and adherents of other beliefs or believers in Indonesia. In this case, believers do not specify the name of the belief in detail but rather categorize it into one category. Meanwhile, ethnicity is limited to the 23 ethnicities in Indonesia.

The hypothesis testing was conducted using the Chi-Square Test, as the population consists of two or more classes, with nominal data and a large sample size. This test is employed to examine differences among more than two proportions for categorical data and to identify relationships between categorical variables. One of the criteria for validity is that each cell must contain at least one expected frequency. Cells with expected frequencies of less than 5 should not exceed 20% of the total cells.

The Relationship Between Gender Identity and Political Preference for Female Presidents. H1 should tests the relationship between respondents' gender identity and their preference for presidential and vice-presidential candidates (with certain gender). However, only the relationship between respondents' gender identity and their preference for presidential and vice-presidential candidates (with certain gender) for a female president-vice president has a significance of less than 0.05, indicating a relationship and distinguishing between male and female respondents regarding preference for a Female president-vice president. Meanwhile, the preferences for male president-vice president do not meet the chi-square test requirements.

H1, which tests the relationship between respondents' gender identity and their preference for female presidential and vice-presidential candidates, was confirmed through the Chi-Square Test. Based on the cross tabulation data, all cells in the cross tabulation expected value are greater than 5, so the Chi-Square test can be continued. After testing the p-value from Pearson Chi-Square of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between respondents' gender identity and their preference for presidential and vice-presidential candidates (with

certain gender). This means that voters' gender is directly related to their political preference, specifically regarding whether they would accept or approve of a female president and vice president.

Further analysis using cross-tabulation provides more detailed data on the percentage of male and female respondents who are willing to accept a female president and vice president.
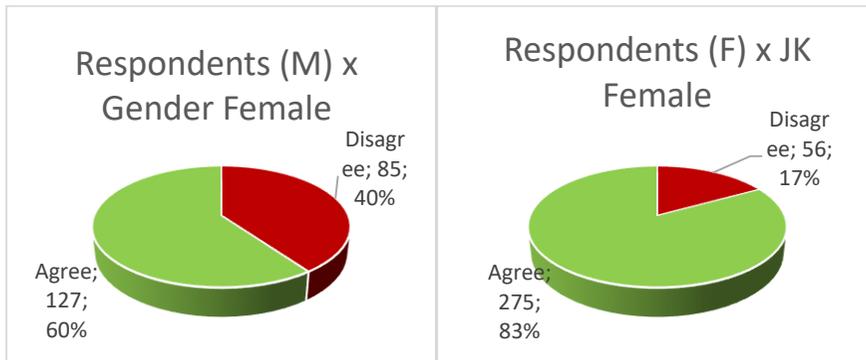
Source: Research Data Processing Results

Figure 1: Distribution of Relationship Between Gender Identity and Political Preference for Female Presidents

Among male respondents, 60 percent indicated that they would accept or approve of a female president and vice president in the 2024 election. Meanwhile, female respondents were more supportive towards female presidential and vice presidential candidates, with 83 percent expressing acceptance or approval. Based on these findings, it can be observed that women are more open to the possibility of a female president and vice president compared to men.

This data is certainly very promising, considering that Indonesia is a patriarchal country, more than half of male respondents are willing to elect a female president and vice president, which is a step forward towards gender equality. However, it is noteworthy that the rate of rejection towards female presidential and vice-presidential candidates remains significant and relatively high, particularly among male first-time voters. And that there are still female first voter respondents who are reluctant to vote for a female president and vice president is certainly a problem in itself.
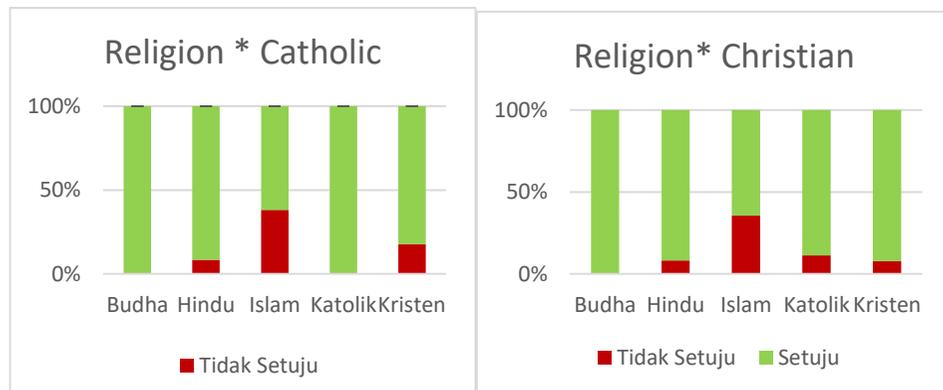
The Relationship Between Religious Identity and Political Preference for Presidents with Different Religions. H2 tests the relationship between respondents' religion identity and their preference for presidential and vice-presidential candidates (with particular religion). However, only the relationship between religious identity and preference for Christian, Catholic,

Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian, or indigenous belief system president-vice president has a significance of less than 0.05, and due to cells with expected frequencies of less than 5 not more than 20%. That indicating a relationship and distinguishing between respondents with certain religion regarding preference for a Christian, Catholic, Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian, or indigenous belief system president-vice president.

Meanwhile, the preferences for a Muslim president-vice president do not meet the chi-square test requirements with the exception of candidates of Islamic faith due to cells with expected frequencies of less than 5 exceeding 20%, specifically 40%).

This means that the religion of first voters is directly related to their political preferences, namely whether they accept or approve of a president-vice president with a certain religion, in this case Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian and Belief Adherents.

In the cross-tabulation test between the respondents' religious identities and the political preferences of the president-vice president with a certain religion, the following data was found in more detail:
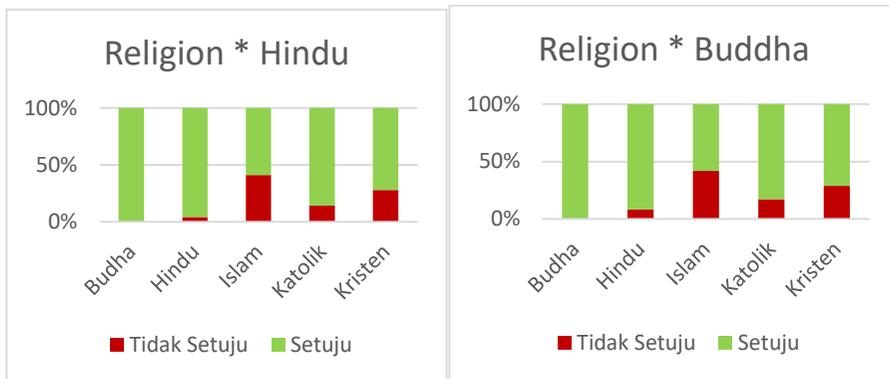

Source: Research Data Processing Results

Figure 2: Distribution of Relationship Between Christian & Catholic Identity and Political Preference for Presidents with Different Religions

From the Figure.2, the Distribution of Relationship Between Christian & Catholic Identity and Political Preference for Presidents and Vice Presidents with Different Religions shows that if the president and vice president are Catholic, 100 percent of respondents who identify as Buddhist and Catholic expressed approval, while 91.7 percent of Hindu respondents agreed. Among Muslim respondents, 61.8 percent expressed approval, and 82.2 percent of Christian respondents also agreed.

Its also shows that if the president and vice president are Christian, 100

percent of Buddhist respondents expressed approval, while 88.6 percent of Catholic respondents, 91.7 percent of Hindu respondents, and 64.4 percent of Muslim respondents indicated approval. Interestingly, 7.8 percent of Christian respondents expressed disapproval, even when the president and vice president are Christians. These two data show that there is rejection of the president and vice president who are Catholic and Christian. Respondents who are Muslim have the highest rejection compared to other religions.

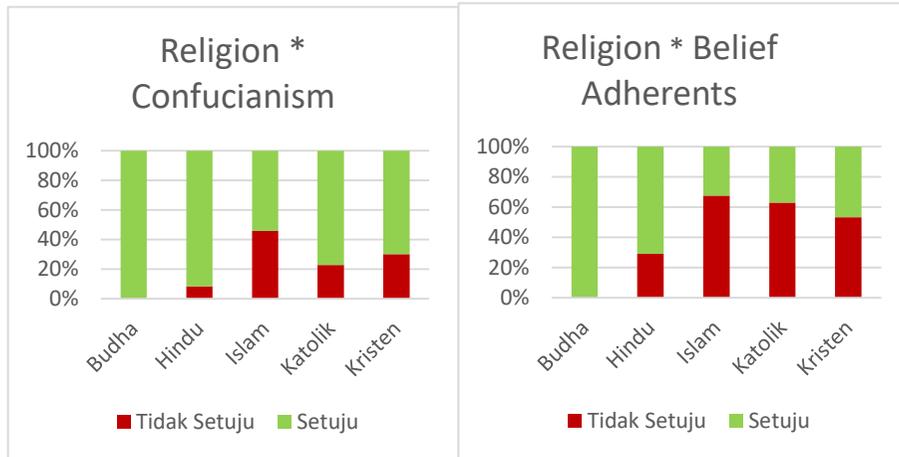Source: Research Data Processing Results

Figure 3: Distribution of Relationship Between Hindu & Buddha Identity and Political Preference for Presidents with Different Religions

From the Figure 3, we can see the distribution of relationship between Hindu & Buddha Identity and Political Preference for Presidents with Different Religions. It shows that if the president and vice president are Hindu, 100 percent of Buddhist respondents expressed approval, while 4.2 percent of Hindu respondents themselves expressed disapproval. The data also show that 59 percent of Muslim respondents, 72.2 percent of Christian respondents, and 85.7 percent of Catholic respondents expressed approval.

It also shows that if the president and vice president are Buddhist, 100 percent of Buddhist respondents expressed approval, while 82.9 percent of Catholic respondents, 91.7 percent of Hindu respondents, 58 percent of Muslim respondents, and 71.1 percent of Christian respondents also indicated approval.

The two data above further strengthen the rejection of the choice of president and vice president who are Hindu and Buddhist. It can be seen that there is an increase in the number of rejections compared to Catholic and Christian presidents and vice presidents, where Muslim respondents still have the highest rejection rate. This data also shows that some Hindu respondents

reject the Hindu president and vice president.

Source: Research Data Processing Results

Figure 4: Distribution of Relationship Between Confucianism & Belief Adherents Identity and Political Preference for Presidents with Different Religions

From the Figure 4, we can see the distribution of relationship between Confucianism & Belief Adherents Identity and Political Preference for Presidents with Different Religions. It shows that if the president and vice president are Confucian, 100 percent of Buddhist respondents expressed approval, while 91.7 percent of Hindu respondents, 54.2 percent of Muslim respondents, 70 percent of Christian respondents, and 77.1 percent of Catholic respondents also expressed approval.

It also shows that if the president and vice president are adherents of indigenous beliefs, 100 percent of Buddhist respondents expressed approval, and 70.8 percent of Hindu respondents agreed. However, differing trends were observed as 62.9 percent of Catholic respondents, 67.7 percent of Muslim respondents, and 63.2 percent of Christian respondents expressed disapproval.

Based on the two data, it can be seen that the president and vice president whose religious identity is beliefs adherent (penghayat kepercayaan) received highest rejection from respondents from various religious identities except Buddhism.

The Relationship Between Respondents' Ethnicity Identity And Their Preference For Presidential And Vice-Presidential Candidates (With Certain Ethnicity). In testing the validity of third hypothesis (H3) for the ethnicity variable, it was proven to be invalid for measuring the relationship between

the ethnicity identity of first-time voter respondents and their preference of president and vice president with certain ethnicity in the 2024 general election because the measurement do not meet the chi-square test requirements. In this context, it is also a weakness of the research because the distribution of ethnic proportions has so many variations that differences between the groups tested were not found.

The Relationship Between Religious Identity and Political Preference for Female Presidents and Vice Presidents. H4, which examines the relationship between respondents' religious identity and their preference for female presidential and vice-presidential candidates, was confirmed through the Chi-Square Test. The test for the Respondent's Religion variable with preference for female president-vice president in a 2x5 column, with no more than 20% of the expected count being less than the minimum, indicates that the test is valid. Since it is a 2x5 table test, the significance value used is the Pearson Chi Square. The significance value is 0.001, which is less than 0.005, indicating a relationship between the respondent's religion and the preference for a female president-vice president. Furthermore, it is possible to differentiate how each religion views a female president-vice president. Based on the cross-tabulation test, the following data were found:
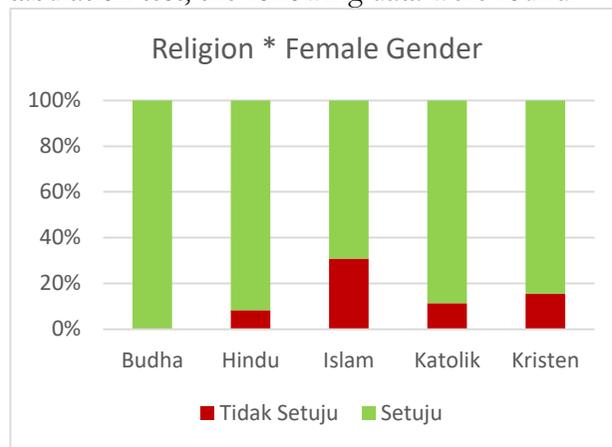
Source: Research Data Processing Results

Figure 5: Distribution of Relationship Between Religious Identity and Political Preference for Female Presidents and Vice Presidents

If the president-vice president were female, 100 percent of Buddhist respondents stated that they agreed, while 91.7 percent of Hindu respondents agreed, 69.2 percent of Muslim respondents agreed, 88.6 percent of Catholic respondents agreed, and 84.4 percent of Christian respondents agreed.

From the data it can be seen that there is a rejection based on the

religion held by respondents towards a female president and vice president, where Muslim respondents tend to have a higher rejection than respondents from other religions.

The Relationship between gender identity and the political preference for a Muslim president-vice president. H5 tests the relationship between gender identity and preference for a president-vice president of a particular religion. However, only the relationship between gender and preference for a Muslim president-vice president, all cells in the cross tabulation expected value are greater than 5, so the Chi-Square test can be continued and has a significance of less than 0.05, indicating a relationship and distinguishing between male and female respondents regarding preference for a Muslim president-vice president. Meanwhile, the preferences for a Christian, Catholic, Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian, or indigenous belief system president-vice president do not meet the chi-square test requirements.

From the cross-tabulation data, as shown in the table below, 91.5 percent of male respondents stated their agreement and acceptance of a Muslim president and vice president, while an even higher percentage of female respondents, at 96.1 percent, expressed acceptance of a Muslim president and vice president.
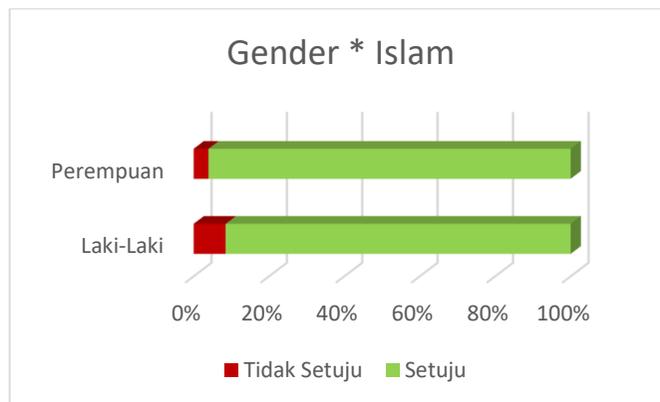
Source: Research Data Processing Results

Figure 6: Relationship between gender identity and the political preference for a Muslim president-vice president

Based on the data findings, we can see that the social identity (gender and religion) of first-time voters is related to their political preferences, particularly when it comes to their preference for a female president-vice president of a certain religion in the 2024 election. This confirms previous research that explains how voter identity influences political preferences (Kaesmetan, 2019; Muhtadi, 2018; Rachmat and Esther, 2016).

Two major issues emerge and are clearly visible in the data findings: how first-time voters accept a female president-vice president and how they accept a president-vice president of a different religion. This acceptance is important in cultural studies, particularly regarding tolerance and social distance, given Indonesia's diverse society and the strengthening of identity politics leading up to the 2024 election, which has the potential to disrupt social harmony.

Meanwhile, in this research, ethnicity cannot be stated as an identity determining the decisions of first-time voters in the presidential and vice-presidential elections in the 2024 general election, because the diversity of the data is too wide. Indonesia is a multi-ethnic country which has more than 300 ethnic groups or ethnic groups. These tribes are spread throughout Indonesia, from Sabang to Merauke. The division of ethnic groups in Indonesia is not absolute and unclear, this is the result of population movements, cultural mixing, and mutual influence. The Javanese tribe is the largest tribe in Indonesia. This tribe covers about a third of the total population of Indonesia, apart from the Javanese tribe, the dominant tribes include the Sundanese tribe, Batak tribe, Minangkabau tribe, Madurese tribe, Betawi tribe, Bugis tribe, Malayan tribe. The large number of ethnicities that exist, as well as the acculturation that occurs, means that the issue of ethnicity does not significantly differentiate respondents' choices.

First-Time Voters Support Female President-Vice President

The majority of first-time voters, both male and female, show a tendency to accept a female president-vice president, especially among female first-time voters. This is the result of extensive education on women's empowerment and existence, women's self-esteem awareness, and women's political participation (Isti'anah and Yunita, 2022), as well as efforts to encourage women to support and empower other women—"women support women" (Safira, 2023).

However, there is still a long way to go, as data shows that 40 percent of male respondents still reject women as leaders. This is, of course, not new; as we know, Indonesia is a country with a strong patriarchal culture, where the narrative about women is built from a male perspective. Women, as Simone de Beauvoir noted, are "the second sex" (Beauvoir, 2023). The patriarchal social system and structure have placed women in an unequal position with men, viewing politics as a male domain (Nimrah and Sakaria, 2015).

Women's representation in politics remains low, as seen in the unfulfilled 30 percent quota, and this quota restriction directly illustrates that gender equality, as offered, is still dominated by patriarchal culture. This

situation is believed to be due to both external and internal factors for women. Externally, political parties still do not seriously engage women by not providing adequate political education (Bahtiar, Akbar, and Syam, 2021).

This is echoed in the research findings of Parwati and Istiningdiah (2020), who, based on a study of eighteen (18) female members of the DPR/DPRD for the 2019–2024 period, found that low participation was also due to internal factors among women, such as being trapped in female stereotypes, the double burden of being a woman, and lack of self-confidence. Additionally, it is difficult for women to engage in politics due to financial and social base constraints, as women are often confined to domestic roles (Nurcahyo, 2016).

Regarding religion, data shows that Muslim respondents have a higher percentage of rejection of female leaders than non-Muslim respondents. Religion is often used as a basis to reject the idea of female leaders, with discriminatory domestication of women used to block women's access to the public sphere. However, the lack of female participation in national politics is not actually due to religion or culture, but rather the use of religion and culture by many men to discriminate against women to maintain their power (Kiftiyah, 2019). Therefore, the finding that the majority of female respondents support a female president-vice president is a promising start to supporting gender equality.

First-Time Voters Tend to Accept a President-Vice President of a Different Religion

Another interesting finding to highlight is how first-time voters tend to be open to the choice of a president-vice president of a different religion. The majority of first-time voters accept a president-vice president from minority religions, such as Catholicism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and indigenous beliefs. Although the data also shows that among Catholicism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and indigenous beliefs, the highest rejection is for the identity of indigenous beliefs (penghayat kepercayaan). Another interesting finding is that there are adherents of certain religions, namely Catholics and Hindus, who even reject presidential and vice presidential candidates from their own religious groups. This proves that religion indeed plays an important role in Indonesia's modern democracy, where the majority of the population is religious, making religion inseparable from politics. Religion is a primary consideration when choosing leaders. The challenge, however, is that Indonesia is a multicultural country, with a majority Muslim population. Selecting leaders based on religious alignment with voters' beliefs remains the highest doctrine. In this case, the data also shows that the Muslim respondent group tends to have

greater rejection of leaders from different religions. This significant figure must also be addressed as a potential disintegration and spread of hoaxes based on religion.

This is evident in regions such as North Sulawesi and West Sumatra. In Ponosakan Belang, North Sulawesi, millennial voters still believe that choosing local leaders should follow Islamic guidance, where the chosen Caliph must align with the commands of Allah and the Prophet (Manese and Nurhamidin, 2021). In West Sumatra, people are deeply concerned about non-Muslim leadership potentially spreading non-Muslim beliefs in their region and, with the authority of local leaders, appointing leaders in religious community organizations who tend to be liberal (Safira, 2022). Therefore, research findings indicating that first-time voters are more open to a president-vice president of a different religion represent a positive development that should be continuously disseminated and strengthened among Generation Z and millennials, who currently dominate the population structure.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, of the five hypotheses proposed, the first hypothesis was proven but only for the relationship between respondents' gender identity and their preference for female presidential and vice-presidential candidates. The second hypothesis is proven to explain the relationship between respondents' religious identity and their preference for presidential and vice-presidential candidates who are Catholic, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian and believer. Hypothesis three is not proven. Hypotheses 4 and 5 are proven. This shows that there are differences in the preferences of first-time voters regarding the selection of presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the 2024 general election, based on the identity of the respondent.

The findings of this study also indicate that the first-time voters participating in this study generally agree to elect a president and vice president with diverse social identities, including those related to gender and religion. This suggests that young voters in Indonesia are increasingly aware of diversity and minority groups. Undoubtedly, this mindfulness is promising, as a lack of awareness of diversity among the younger generation could create social distance (disparity) for those with different social identities. Such social distance would make first-time voters more susceptible to identity politics tactics, which are often used in Indonesian elections.

However, the study's findings also show that Muslim first-time voters tend to be hesitant to support presidential candidates of different religions. This is reflected in the average percentage of Muslim respondents opposing

non-Islamic candidates, which remains above 40%. This highlights the need for further research to carefully investigate the reasons why Muslim first-time voters choose to support or reject presidential candidates of non-Islamic faiths.

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