

# **THE DYNAMICS OF POLITICIANS' *SILATURAHMI* TO KIAI BEFORE ELECTIONS IN INDONESIA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY BASED ON ELITE THEORY AND *SIYASAH SYAR'IIYAH***

**Lisa Hertiana<sup>1</sup>, Supriyadi<sup>2</sup>, Arif Sugitanata<sup>3</sup>, Muhammad Hasyied Abdurrasyied<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1,3</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey

<sup>4</sup>Universitas Al-Azhar Cairo, Egypt

Email: hertianalisa@gmail.com

## ***Abstract***

The phenomenon of politicians visiting Kiai ahead of elections in Indonesia reflects politicians' strategy to gain support by exploiting the Kiai's influence. This research aims to reveal the dynamics, influences and controversies surrounding this practice. This research utilizes literature study with qualitative research type and descriptive-analytical research nature which refers to the political elite theory of Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca as well as *Siyasah Syar'iiyah*. The results show that the practice is often used to gain blessing and moral support from Kiai, which is then used in political campaigns. However, this approach has attracted criticism because it can blur the boundaries between religion and politics and poses the risk of transactional support that undermines the Kiai's integrity. Analysis of political elite theory by Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca reveals how elite politicians and Kiai use each other to maintain their power and legitimacy. Meanwhile, from the *Siyasah Syar'iiyah* perspective, it emphasizes the importance of justice, transparency and balance in Kiai's political involvement, and highlights the need for political education based on Islamic values to empower society in a healthy democratic process.

***Keywords:*** *Kiai, Politician, Election, Political Elite*

## **Abstrak**

Fenomena musiman silaturahmi politisi ke Kiai menjelang pemilu di Indonesia mencerminkan strategi politisi untuk meraih dukungan dengan memanfaatkan pengaruh Kiai sebagai pemimpin spiritual yang dihormati dan memiliki jaringan sosial luas. Berdasarkan hal tersebut, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap dinamika, pengaruh, dan kontroversi yang melingkupi praktik tersebut, serta menganalisis bagaimana elite politik memanfaatkan hubungan dengan Kiai untuk meraih suara. Penelitian ini memanfaatkan studi kepustakaan dengan jenis penelitian kualitatif dan sifat penelitian deskriptif-analitis yang merujuk pada teori elite politik Vilfredo Pareto dan Gaetano Mosca serta *Siyasah Syar'iiyah*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa, praktik silaturahmi politisi ke Kiai menjelang pemilu di Indonesia, sering digunakan untuk mendapatkan restu dan dukungan moral dari Kiai, yang kemudian dimanfaatkan dalam kampanye politik. Namun, pendekatan tersebut mengundang kritik karena dapat mengaburkan batas antara agama dan politik serta menimbulkan risiko dukungan transaksional yang merusak integritas Kiai. Analisis teori elite politik Vilfredo Pareto dan Gaetano Mosca mengungkapkan bagaimana elite politisi dan Kiai saling memanfaatkan untuk mempertahankan kekuasaan dan legitimasi mereka. Sementara itu, dalam perspektif *Siyasah Syar'iiyah* menekankan pentingnya keadilan, transparansi, dan keseimbangan dalam keterlibatan politik Kiai, serta menyoroti kebutuhan akan pendidikan

politik yang berbasis nilai-nilai Islam untuk memberdayakan masyarakat dalam proses demokrasi yang sehat.

**Kata Kunci:** *Kiai, Politisi, Pemilu, Elite Politik*

## A. Introduction

In the context of Indonesian politics, the practice of *silaturahmi*, or politicians' *silaturahmi* to *Kiai* before elections, is a long-standing phenomenon with significant influence on political campaign dynamics.<sup>1</sup> *Kiai*, as religious figures and spiritual leaders within the community,<sup>2</sup> hold strategic positions capable of influencing the political views and decisions of their followers.<sup>3</sup> It makes *Kiai* important figures who often become targets of politicians' *silaturahmi* to gain electoral support.<sup>4</sup> However, despite this practice's long history and its perception as an effective campaign strategy, it also brings about complex dynamics, impacts, and controversies.<sup>5</sup>

Scholars have elucidated that *Kiai*, as spiritual leaders within the configuration of neoliberal democratic politics in Indonesia, particularly in regional elections (Pilkada), holds essential positions in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools). They are not just political players but individuals of spiritual significance, often becoming crucial elements in political consolidation. However, they are also caught in the pragmatism of money

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<sup>1</sup> Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf dkk., *Politik Lokal dan Konflik Keagamaan: Pilkada dan struktur kesempatan politik dalam konflik keagamaan di Sampang, Bekasi, dan Kupang* (Yogyakarta: Program Studi Agama dan Lintas Budaya (Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies/CRCS), 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Oktaviani dan Arif Sugitanata, "Memberikan Hak Wali Nikah Kepada Kyai: Praktik Taukil Wali Nikah Pada Masyarakat Adat Sasak Sade," *Al-Ahwal: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 12, no. 2 (2020): 161–72, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ahwal.2019.12204>.

<sup>3</sup> M Ali Andrias, "Model kepemimpinan politik kyai: Studi peran kyai dalam pergeseran perilaku politik massa NU PKB dan PPP," *Politika: Jurnal Ilmu Politik* 7, no. 2 (2016): 21–33, <https://doi.org/10.14710/politika.7.2.2016.21-33>.

<sup>4</sup> Ridho Al-Hamdi, *Kuasa padat modal: strategi elektoral partai dalam sistem liberal* (Yogyakarta: Basabasi, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Admin Web IAIN Madura, "Politik Kiai dan Kiai Politik: Aksi dan Interpretasi Pesantren dalam Pemaknaan dan Pergumulan Politik Islam Oleh Abdul Mukti Thabrani," *IAIN MADURA*, 27 November 2015, <https://iainmadura.ac.id/berita/2015/11/politik-kiai-dan-kiai-politik-aksi-dan-interpretasi-pesantren-dalam-pemaknaan-dan-pergumulan-politik-islam-br-oleh-abdul-mukti-thabrani>.

politics.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, *Kiai* tends to use a rational choice approach in assessing the quality and competence of legislative candidates. In contrast, their students tend to follow *Kiai's* guidance due to their limited involvement in the campaign phase.<sup>7</sup> Other studies have explored the electoral political relationship between *Kiai* and students in local leadership elections in East Java, finding that the patron-client relationship between *Kiai* and students is not relevant in electoral politics, with a more egalitarian relationship and the practice of political deliberation among them.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, research exists on *Kiai's* involvement in politics from a religious and political perspective. It was found that although there is a political narrative in da'wah activities, it does not diminish the sanctity of the da'wah itself. The use of religious spaces in campaigns remains significant in raising political awareness.<sup>9</sup>

Based on the above explanations, this research shifts focus, aiming to uncover and analyze in depth the phenomenon of political *silaturahmi* to *Kiai* in the context of election campaigns in Indonesia. The main focus of this research is, first, to explain the dynamics, impacts, and controversies surrounding this practice, and second, to explain how political elites utilize relationships with *Kiai* to garner votes. In analyzing this phenomenon, this research uses the political elite theory of Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca to explore the strategies and efforts made by elites in building power through *silaturahmi* with *Kiai*. Third, this research also evaluates the seasonal phenomenon through the perspective of *Siyasah Syar'iyah* to understand the

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<sup>6</sup> Moh Khoirul Umam dan Muchlisin Muchlisin, "Kyai Pesantren dan Politik Uang dalam Pilkada Indonesia," *Resolusi: Jurnal Sosial Politik* 5, no. 2 (2022): 71–81, <https://doi.org/10.32699/resolusi.v5i2.2906>.

<sup>7</sup> Akhorin Siswanto, Supriyadi Supriyadi, dan Ahmad Zuber, "The Voting Behavior of Kyai And Santri on the Legislative Election of 2019," *Interdisciplinary Social Studies* 2, no. 1 (2022): 1487–96, <https://doi.org/10.55324/iss.v2i1.298>.

<sup>8</sup> Masruri Mahali, Wawan Sobari, dan George Towar Ikbal Tawwakal, "Kyai-santri relationship in electoral politics: A critical point of view," *JIP (Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan): Kajian Ilmu Pemerintahan dan Politik Daerah* 4, no. 2 (2019): 75–89, <https://doi.org/10.24905/jip.4.2.2019.75-89>.

<sup>9</sup> Umdatul Hasanah dan Eneng Purwanti, "Kyai, Politics And Dakwah Patterns: Reading Political Narratives In Religious Spaces (Study In Banten)," *Al Qalam* 37, no. 1 (2020): 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.32678/alqalam.v37i1.2462>.

background and motives of politicians in conducting *silaturahmi* with *Kiai* before elections, identifying the impact and influence of politicians' *silaturahmi* to *Kiai* on voters and election outcomes, including ethics, legitimacy, and Islamic legal implications.

Methodologically, this research is a comprehensive literature review that employs qualitative research to address the three main issues posed. The data used in this research is meticulously sourced from various academic sources, including books, journals, and articles on websites relevant to the research object. The data is then analyzed descriptively and analytically using rigorous analytical tools referring to the political elite theory of Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca, as well as the perspective of *Siyasah Syar'iyah*. By applying this careful analysis and appropriate methodology, it is hoped that this research can provide valuable contributions to the understanding of political dynamics and elite strategies in gaining political support through *silaturahmi* networks with religious figures such as *Kiai*.

## **B. Results And Discussion**

### **1. Building Social and Political Networks in Indonesia through *Silaturahmi***

*Silaturahmi*, which literally means establishing relationships or bonds of brotherhood,<sup>10</sup> plays a highly significant role in the social and political context of Indonesia. This tradition is not only an integral part of Indonesian culture but also a strategic tool for building strong social and political networks.<sup>11</sup> In Indonesian society, *silaturahmi* is often conducted through *silaturahmi* between families, friends, or community leaders.<sup>12</sup> These activities

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<sup>10</sup> Andi Darussalam, "Wawasan Hadis tentang Silaturahmi," *Tahdis: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Al-Hadis* 8, no. 2 (2017): 116–32, <https://doi.org/10.24252/tahdis.v8i2.7222>.

<sup>11</sup> Nofal Liata, "Relasi pertukaran sosial antara masyarakat dan partai politik," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia (JSAI)* 1, no. 1 (2020): 79–95, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jsai.v1i1.483>.

<sup>12</sup> Admin Baznas, "5 Tradisi Silaturahmi Unik di Indonesia," *BAZNAS*, Mei 2023, <https://baznas.go.id/artikel-show/5-Tradisi-Silaturahmi-Unik-di-Indonesia/188>.

not only strengthen emotional and social bonds but also create opportunities for the exchange of information and support. In the political context, *silaturahmi* becomes more than just friendly *silaturahmi*; it functions as a crucial mechanism for building and maintaining power networks. Politicians often utilize these moments to expand their support base, both among the elite and the general public.<sup>13</sup>

Within the political sphere, *silaturahmi* assumes several key functions. Primarily, it serves as a conduit for social legitimacy. Politicians who actively participate in *silaturahmi*, particularly with community and religious leaders, can bolster their legitimacy in the eyes of the public. *Silaturahmi* to religious leaders, for instance, are often perceived as endeavours to secure moral support and approval, thereby enhancing a positive image among voters.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, *silaturahmi* operates as a strategic political communication tool.<sup>15</sup> In these encounters, politicians have the platform to directly articulate their visions and missions, as well as to absorb the aspirations and grievances of the people.

Moreover, *silaturahmi*, as a political instrument, also mirrors the dimension of patronage within the Indonesian political system. The patron-client relationships forged through *silaturahmi* facilitate the exchange of resources and benefits between politicians and their supporters.<sup>16</sup> For instance, politicians may offer financial aid or development projects to specific communities in return for political support. Despite its contentious nature, this practice has become an integral part of the political dynamics in many regions

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<sup>13</sup> Sisca, "Background Halal Bihalal Idul Fitri," *birdsnbees.co.id*, 19 Maret 2024, <https://www.birdsnbees.co.id/background-halal-bihalal-idul-fitri/>.

<sup>14</sup> Rini Kustiasih, "Gerak Elite Politik Menjalinkan Politik Silaturahmi," *Kompas.id*, 27 April 2022, <https://www.kompas.id/baca/polhuk/2022/04/26/ketika-para-elite-menjalinkan-politik-silaturahmi>.

<sup>15</sup> Anang Masduki dan Rendra Widyatama, "Efektifitas strategi komunikasi politik elit muhammadiyah DIY dalam Pemenangan Pemilu DPD-RI Tahun 2014," *Communicare: Journal of Communication Studies* 5, no. 1 (2018): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.37535/101005120181>.

<sup>16</sup> Cecep Cecep Suryana dkk., *Melek politik: Politik perspektif guru Aang Kunaefi* (Bandung: Gunung Djati Publishing, 2024).

of Indonesia.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, *silaturahmi* assumes a pivotal role in upholding political stability. By nurturing amicable relationships through *silaturahmi*, political conflicts and tensions can be mitigated. These informal gatherings often serve as platforms for negotiation and conflict resolution that may not be attainable through formal channels. Hence, *silaturahmi* emerges as a highly valuable tool in fostering a conducive and harmonious political atmosphere.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, *silaturahmi* as a tool for building social and political networks in Indonesia demonstrates how cultural traditions can be integrated into modern political practices. It not only strengthens social bonds but also provides politicians with an effective means to build and maintain power. Consequently, understanding the role of *silaturahmi* in this context is crucial for appreciating the political and social dynamics in Indonesia.

## **2. Political *Silaturahmi* to *Kiai*: Dynamics, Influence, and Controversy in Election Campaigns in Indonesia**

The seasonal phenomenon of *silaturahmi* to *Kiai* to garner political support in Indonesia is a notable dynamic, especially leading up to the elections.<sup>19</sup> Politicians often utilize this practice to gain support from communities that have emotional and religious ties to *Kiai*.<sup>20</sup> As religious leaders and community figures, *Kiai* hold significant influence in shaping the political opinions and choices of their followers.<sup>21</sup> The tradition of *silaturahmi* to *Kiai* in a political context aims not only to show respect and maintain good

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<sup>17</sup> Ratnia Solihah, "Politik transaksional dalam pilkada serentak dan implikasinya bagi pemerintahan daerah di Indonesia," *The POLITICS: Jurnal Magister Ilmu Politik Universitas Hasanuddin* 2, no. 1 (2016): 97–109, <https://doi.org/10.31947/politics.v2i1.1659>.

<sup>18</sup> Nurcholis Maarif, "Silaturahmi Kebangsaan Dinilai Bisa Ciptakan Stabilitas Politik," *detikNews*, Desember 2019, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4820839/silaturahmi-kebangsaan-dinilai-bisa-ciptakan-stabilitas-politik>.

<sup>19</sup> Komaruddin Hidayat, *Dari Pesantren Untuk Dunia* (Yogyakarta: Prenada Media, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> Hendra Gunawan dan Akhmad Satori, "Budaya Politik Pesantren Cipasung Singaparna Kabupaten Tasikmalaya," *Jurnal Ilmu Politik dan Pemerintahan* 1, no. 4 (2014): 425–42, <https://doi.org/10.37058/jipp.v1i4.2269>.

<sup>21</sup> Puji Qomariyah, "Respon Masyarakat Terhadap Peran Politik Kyai," *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif* 9, no. 1 (2014): 33–49, <https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/isoshum/sosiologireflektif/article/view/1131>.

relationships but also to leverage *Kiai's* influence in attracting voter support.<sup>22</sup> Politicians frequently visit pesantren or the homes of *Kiai* to seek blessings and moral support, which are then used as campaign tools.<sup>23</sup> By securing the backing of a *Kiai*, politicians hope to secure votes from the students and loyal followers of the *Kiai*.<sup>24</sup> It is because the *Kiais* are highly respected and regarded as wise spiritual leaders.<sup>25</sup> They have extensive social networks and can mobilize the masses to support specific candidates.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, these political *silaturahmi* are not merely ordinary but also a careful political strategy to increase electability.

However, this phenomenon also invites various criticisms and debates. Some argue that this approach can undermine the integrity of *Kiai* and blur the lines between religious and political affairs.<sup>27</sup> There are concerns that the support given by *Kiai* can be transactional, where politicians offer various assistance or facilities in exchange for support. It can obscure the boundary between the role of *Kiai* as spiritual leaders and as political tools. On the other hand, some believe that the involvement of *Kiai* in politics is natural, considering their significant role in the social and cultural life of the community. *Kiai* is seen as having the right to participate in the democratic

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<sup>22</sup> Mahatva Yoga Adi Pradana, "Relasi Kuasa Politik Tokoh Agama Dalam Hegemoni Pemilukada 2020," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 3, no. 2 (2020): 417–38, <https://doi.org/10.14421/lijid.v3i2.2418>.

<sup>23</sup> Farid Nurdiansyah, "Pengaruh Kiai Pada Politik Pemilihan Kepala Desa Bakalanpule Kecamatan Tikung Kabupaten Lamongan," *Kajian Moral dan Kewarganegaraan* 6, no. 2 (2018): 641–55.

<sup>24</sup> Fitria Barokah, "Mistisisme Politik: Eksistensi Magis dalam Perpolitikan Indonesia," *JiIP: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pemerintahan* 8, no. 1 (2023): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.14710/jiip.v8i1.13275>.

<sup>25</sup> Anita Anita dkk., "Pesantren, Kepemimpinan Kiai, dan Ajaran Tarekat sebagai Potret Dinamika Lembaga Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia," *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme* 4, no. 3 (2022): 509–24, <https://doi.org/10.37680/scaffolding.v4i3.1955>.

<sup>26</sup> Asmawati Asmawati, Towar Ikbal Tawakkal, dan Sholih Muadi, "Religion, Political Contestation and Democracy: Kiai's Role as Vote Broker in Madurese Local Political Battle," *Buletin Al-Turas* 27, no. 1 (2021): 37–54, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/572825117.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Ken Miichi, "Democratization and the Changing Role of Civil Society in Indonesia," *Middle East Institute*, Oktober 2015, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/democratization-and-changing-role-civil-society-indonesia>.

process and voice the aspirations of their followers.<sup>28</sup> The support of *Kiai* can also be viewed as an active form of participation in ensuring that elected leaders are committed to fighting for the people's interests and possess moral integrity.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, this phenomenon demonstrates how cultural and religious factors greatly influence Indonesian politics. Political *silaturahmi* to *Kiai* highlight the importance of approaches that align with local values and traditions in political campaigns. This pattern also reflects politicians' tendency to seek moral legitimacy through religious figures, who are often seen as embodiments of ethical values and truth.<sup>30</sup>

In the sociopolitical context, *Kiai* plays a dual role as moral guardians and as intermediaries between the government and the community.<sup>31</sup> When a *Kiai* supports a politician, it is often interpreted by the public as a form of moral endorsement and a sign that the politician possesses good leadership qualities.<sup>32</sup> Conversely, politicians who receive the blessing of a *Kiai* can leverage this to build a positive image and increase their popularity among the public. However, not all *Kiai* are willing to engage in practical politics.<sup>33</sup> Many *Kiai* choose to maintain a distance from politics to preserve their independence and spiritual integrity. They are concerned that involvement in politics might interfere with their primary mission as religious leaders and

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<sup>28</sup> Tomi Nurrohman, "Dilema Partisipasi Kiai dalam Panggung Politik," *IAIN Metro*, 9 Januari 2022, <https://www.metrouniv.ac.id/artikel/dilema-partisipasi-kiai-dalam-panggung-politik/>.

<sup>29</sup> Sunarso Nurhadi dan S Sunarso, "Peran Kiai Dalam Membangun Partisipasi Pemilih," *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 3, no. 2 (2018): 169–75, <http://download.garuda.kemdikbud.go.id/article.php?article=1005581&val=9798&title=PERAN%20KIAI%20DALAM%20MEMBANGUN%20PARTISIPASI%20PEMILIH>.

<sup>30</sup> Pradana, "Relasi Kuasa"

<sup>31</sup> Kasful Anwar Us, "Kepemimpinan kiai pesantren: studi terhadap pondok pesantren di kota jambi," *Kontekstualita: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 25, no. 2 (2010): 225–54, <https://www.neliti.com/publications/37095/kepemimpinan-kiai-pesantren-studi-terhadap-pondok-pesantren-di-kota-jambi>.

<sup>32</sup> Aries Musnandar, "Kepemimpinan Kyai dan Politik Praktis," *Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang*, 25 Juni 2014, <https://www.umm.ac.id/id/opini/kepemimpinan-kyai-dan-politik-praktis.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Muhammad Zulfikar, "PBNU ingatkan tokoh agama tidak terlibat politik praktis," *antaranews.com*, 18 Januari 2023, <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/3354831/pbnu-ingatkan-tokoh-agama-tidak-terlibat-politik-praktis>.



diminish the trust of their followers. For *Kiai*, who refuses to engage in politics, maintaining purity and neutrality is crucial to preserving their legitimacy as respected spiritual leaders.<sup>34</sup> This phenomenon also illustrates the reciprocal relationship between *Kiai* and politicians. *Kiai*, who support politicians, often receive benefits in the form of support for their religious and social activities. This support can include infrastructure development, funding for social activities, or other assistance that benefits their communities.<sup>35</sup> It creates a mutualistic symbiosis where both parties gain advantages.

However, reliance on *Kiai's* support in politics can also create problems if not appropriately managed. There is a risk that politicians may become overly dependent on *Kiai* and neglect the direct aspirations of the broader community. Additionally, suppose *Kiai's* support is given based solely on political considerations and not on values of justice and truth. In that case, it can undermine public trust in religious institutions and the democratic process itself.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, there must be awareness and collective efforts to maintain the integrity of the political process and the role of *Kiai* in society. Good political education, transparency, and accountability are vital to ensuring that political support from *Kiai* is genuinely based on noble values and not merely temporary interests. The community also needs to be empowered to be more critical and active in the political process so that they do not solely rely on the guidance of religious figures but are also able to make decisions based on comprehensive and objective information. Thus, the seasonal phenomenon of *silaturahmi* to *Kiai* to garner political support in Indonesia reflects the complexity of the interaction between religion, culture, and politics. It highlights how traditional values and the influence of religious

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<sup>34</sup> Zainuddin Syarif, "Pergeseran perilaku politik Kiai dan santri di Pamekasan Madura," *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 16, no. 2 (2016): 293–311, <https://doi.org/10.21154/al-tahrir.v16i2.500>.

<sup>35</sup> Umam dan Muchlisin, "Kyai Pesantren.."

<sup>36</sup> Yoky Armando Sunaryo dan Oksiana Jatiningasih, "Pandangan Intelektual Terhadap Wacana Kyai Pendukung Khofifah Indar Parawansa Dalam Kontestasi Pemilihan Gubernur Jawa Timur 2018," *Kajian moral dan kewarganegaraan* 9, no. 3 (2021): 610–25, <https://doi.org/10.26740/kmkn.v9n3.p610-625>.

figures remain vital in determining the political dynamics in Indonesia while also emphasizing the importance of maintaining a balance between morality and healthy political practices.

### **3. Analysis of Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca's Theory on the Efforts of Political Elites to Garner Votes through *Silaturahmi* to *Kiai***

The seasonal phenomenon of political *silaturahmi* to *Kiai* in Indonesia to garner political support can be analyzed using the Elite Theory of Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca. This theory highlights how elites in society play a dominant role in political decision-making and maintain power through various strategies, including symbolic manipulation and moral legitimacy.<sup>37</sup> Pareto introduced the concept of “circulation of elites,” where there is a continuous turnover among ruling elite groups. Vilfredo Pareto also called the 80/20 rule, which suggests that 80% of effects come from 20% of causes, illustrating the uneven distribution of resources and outcomes. He also developed a theory of elites, positing that society is divided into elites and non-elites, with elites possessing superior qualities that allow them to rise to the top in various sectors. Pareto believed in the constant circulation of elites, where new elites replace the old, ensuring social stability and change. Additionally, Pareto introduced the concept of Pareto Optimality in economics, where a situation is efficient if no individual can be made better off without making someone else worse off.<sup>38</sup> In the context of political *silaturahmi* to *Kiai*, politicians can be seen as part of the elite striving to maintain or enhance their power by gaining the support of *Kiai*. *Kiai*, as spiritual and moral leaders of the community, holds significant influence and can be considered elites in the social and religious domains.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, politicians seek to build alliances with *Kiai* to strengthen their positions and leverage the *Kiai*'s moral authority to legitimize their political interests.

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<sup>37</sup> John Higley dan Jan Pakulski, “Pareto’s theory of elite cycles: a reconsideration and application,” dalam *Vilfredo Pareto* (Routledge: Routledge, 2017), 111–30.

<sup>38</sup> Pareto Vilfredo, *The Rise and Fall of Elites: An Application of Theoretical Sociology* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968).

<sup>39</sup> Qomariyah, “Respon Masyarakat Terhadap Peran Politik Kyai.”

Gaetano Mosca, in his theory of the ruling class, emphasizes that power is always held by an organized minority (the elite) while the majority (the masses) are under their control. Gaetano Mosca, on the other hand, is renowned for his theory of the ruling class, which posits that all societies are governed by a minority ruling class that controls the majority. He argued that this ruling class maintains power through superior organizational skills and unity. Mosca introduced the concept of a political class, a subset of the ruling class involved directly in governance and administration, crucial for societal stability. Both Pareto and Mosca's contributions form the foundation of elite theory, which examines the roles and dynamics of elites in society, emphasizing the inevitability and necessity of elites for societal organization while acknowledging the potential for power abuse and the need for accountability mechanisms<sup>40</sup> In this phenomenon, *Kiai* acts as an intermediaries between politicians and the masses, organizing and mobilizing support for particular politicians.<sup>41</sup> Thus, *Kiai* plays a role in maintaining the stability of the existing power structure, while politicians use this relationship to bolster legitimacy and secure votes. Mosca also highlights the importance of ideology and beliefs in maintaining power.<sup>42</sup> The support of *Kiai* is often viewed as an ideological and moral endorsement, providing politicians with the necessary authority to gain public trust.<sup>43</sup>

However, this phenomenon is not without criticism and challenges. The integrity of *Kiai* can be at stake if their involvement in politics is perceived as a pragmatic transaction rather than a moral action.<sup>44</sup> Pareto's and Mosca's theories can help explain how political elites use relationships with *Kiai* to create an illusion of moral legitimacy, despite possible transactional elements

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<sup>40</sup> Norberto Bobbio, *Gaetano Mosca and the theory of the ruling class* (Librairie Droz, 1972).

<sup>41</sup> Asmawati, Tawakkal, dan Muadi, "Religion, Political Contestation and Democracy: *Kiai*'s Role as Vote Broker in Madurese Local Political Battle."

<sup>42</sup> Alan Zuckerman, "The Concept "Political Elite": Lessons from Mosca and Pareto," *The Journal of Politics* 39, no. 2 (1977): 324–44, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2130054>.

<sup>43</sup> Aries Musnandar, "Kepemimpinan Kyai dan Politik Praktis."

<sup>44</sup> Ken Miichi, "Democratization and the Changing Role of Civil Society in Indonesia."

behind it.<sup>45</sup> Politicians may offer assistance or facilities in exchange for support, creating a relationship that is more transactional than spiritual. This can damage public perception of the *Kiai's* role and blur the lines between religion and politics, posing a significant risk to the *Kiai's* integrity and the social fabric.

Furthermore, the involvement of *Kiai* in practical politics can affect their independence as spiritual leaders.<sup>46</sup> According to Mosca, when elites try to maintain power, they tend to use all available means, including the co-optation of other elites.<sup>47</sup> In this context, *Kiai* involved in politics may face pressure to support certain politicians, which can reduce their autonomy and impact their primary mission as religious leaders. On the other hand, this phenomenon also indicates that *Kiai* has a significant role in the social and political life of Indonesian society. The support of *Kiai* can be seen as a form of active participation in the democratic process, ensuring that the elected leaders are those with moral commitment and integrity.<sup>48</sup> However, good political education and increased critical awareness among the public are crucial to ensure that political support from *Kiai* is based on noble values and not merely on short-term interests.

Furthermore, it is essential to delve deeper into how this phenomenon reflects the broader dynamics of power in Indonesian politics. Pareto mentions that elites use "residues" or certain psychological elements to maintain power.<sup>49</sup> In this context, *Kiai* serve as symbols of morality and tradition used by politicians to legitimize their power. Politicians seek not only the blessing of *Kiai* for direct legitimacy but also to tap into the emotional and psychological layers of society that respect and trust *Kiai* as spiritual leaders.

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<sup>45</sup> Zuckerman, "The Concept" Political Elite": Lessons from Mosca and Pareto."

<sup>46</sup> Syarif, "Pergeseran perilaku politik Kiai dan santri di Pamekasan Madura."

<sup>47</sup> Bobbio, *Gaetano Mosca and the theory of the ruling class*.

<sup>48</sup> Aries Musnandar, "Kepemimpinan Kyai dan Politik Praktis."

<sup>49</sup> Higley dan Pakulski, "Pareto's theory of elite cycles: a reconsideration and application."

Pareto also argues that the ruling elites will always look for ways to accommodate and absorb new elements that could potentially threaten their power.<sup>50</sup> It is evident in how politicians seek to attract support from *Kiai*, who may have a significant mass base. By approaching *Kiai*, politicians aim to ensure that these elements do not become opposition but rather part of their support structure. It creates a dynamic where political elites continuously strive to renew and adjust their alliances to maintain dominance.

Gaetano Mosca highlights that the power of the elite also depends on their ability to organize and mobilize support.<sup>51</sup> *Kiai*, with their social networks and influence, plays a vital role in this process. The support of *Kiai* not only provides moral legitimacy but also supplies an organizational structure that politicians can use to mobilize grassroots support. Mosca also states that elites tend to develop systems and institutions that reinforce their power.<sup>52</sup> In this context, the tradition of political *silaturahmi* to *Kiai* can be seen as one of the informal institutions that help maintain the status quo of elite power by binding *Kiai's* support to their political interests.

However, there is another dimension to consider: the long-term impact of this phenomenon on democracy and religious institutions. Excessive reliance on *Kiai's* support can erode the quality of democracy by reducing healthy political competition and making elections more dependent on personal relationships rather than precise performance and policies.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, suppose *Kiai's* support is perceived as something that can be bought or influenced by material rewards. In that case, this can undermine public trust in both religious institutions and the political process itself. This phenomenon also indicates a strong pattern of patronage in Indonesian politics, where patron-client relationships are crucial to gaining and

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<sup>50</sup> Higley dan Pakulski.

<sup>51</sup> Bobbio, *Gaetano Mosca and the theory of the ruling class*.

<sup>52</sup> Zuckerman, "The Concept" Political Elite": Lessons from Mosca and Pareto."

<sup>53</sup> Sunaryo dan Jatningsih, "Pandangan Intelektual Terhadap Wacana Kyai Pendukung Khofifah Indar Parawansa Dalam Kontestasi Pemilihan Gubernur Jawa Timur 2018."

maintaining power. In this system, *Kiai* can function as patrons who provide access to their mass base, while politicians act as clients who offer various forms of rewards in return. This patronage pattern illustrates how political elites in Indonesia use social networks and personal relationships to consolidate their power, often at the expense of democratic principles and transparency. Moreover, the involvement of *Kiai* in politics also shows how religion and politics influence each other in the Indonesian cultural context. The support of *Kiai* is often interpreted as a religious endorsement, providing politicians with social capital and trust that is difficult to obtain through other means.<sup>54</sup> However, this also poses the risk that politics can taint the spiritual integrity of *Kiai*, and religion can be used as a pragmatic political tool.

Ultimately, the phenomenon of political *silaturahmi* to *Kiai* reflects the complexity of interactions between political elites and religious figures in Indonesian society. An analysis based on Pareto's and Mosca's theories demonstrates how elites use this relationship to maintain their power and legitimacy while highlighting the challenges and risks that arise from such practices. In order to preserve the integrity of both politics and religion, society needs to develop critical awareness and enhance political participation based on objective and comprehensive information.

#### **4. The Seasonal Phenomenon of *Silaturahmi* to *Kiai* in Efforts to Garner Political Votes in Indonesia through the Lens of *Siyasah Syar'iyah***

The seasonal phenomenon of politicians *silaturahmi* to *Kiai* for political support ahead of elections in Indonesia can be deeply analyzed using the perspective of *Siyasah Syar'iyah*. This perspective emphasizes principles of governance aligned with Islamic Sharia.<sup>55</sup> The analysis begins with a study of the integrity of a *Kiai*, who is a spiritual and moral leader in society and whose integrity must be strictly maintained. The perspective of *Siyasah Syar'iyah*

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<sup>54</sup> Barokah, "Mistisisme Politik: Eksistensi Magis dalam Perpolitikan Indonesia."

<sup>55</sup> Mustafa Omar Mohammed dan Omar Kachkar, "Developing al-Siyasah al-Shar'iyah Framework for Contemporary Public Policy Analysis," *Media Syari'ah: Wahana Kajian Hukum Islam dan Pranata Sosial* 18, no. 2 (2017): 339–62, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jms.v18i2.1923>.

explains that religious leaders should not engage in practical politics that mix religious affairs with politics for personal or group gain.<sup>56</sup> Political *silaturahmi* to *Kiai*, if conducted with transactional motives—where political support is obtained in exchange for facilities or assistance—can undermine the *Kiai's* integrity and tarnish their primary mission as guardians of moral and spiritual values.<sup>57</sup> *Siyasah Syar'iyah* also underscores the importance of justice and legitimacy in every political action.<sup>58</sup> Political support given by a *Kiai* should be based on considerations of justice, truth, and the moral commitment of the candidate, not merely on political interests or short-term benefits. When *Kiai's* support is given based on pure and just considerations, it can enhance political legitimacy and strengthen a healthy democratic process. Conversely, support given without these values can diminish public trust in religious institutions and the democratic process.<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore, according to the principles of *Siyasah Syar'iyah*, religious figures' involvement in politics is legitimate as long as they act for the common good and not for personal or group benefit.<sup>60</sup> *Kiai* involved in politics should serve as channels for the people's aspirations and ensure that the policies promoted by politicians align with Islamic values and the people's interests.<sup>61</sup> However, *Kiai* must maintain a balance between their roles as spiritual leaders and political actors to avoid blurring the existing boundaries. *Siyasah Syar'iyah* also emphasizes the importance of proper political

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<sup>56</sup> Arief Budiono dkk., "Implementation of the *Siyasah Syar'iyah* Policy in Aceh Province," *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 9, no. 1 (2022): 724–32, <https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v9i1.3640>.

<sup>57</sup> Ken Miichi, "Democratization and the Changing Role of Civil Society in Indonesia."

<sup>58</sup> Salah Ud Din, Sharifah Hayaati Syed Ismail, dan Raja Hisyamudin Raja Sulong, "Combating corruption based on *Al-Siyasah al-Syar'iyah* perspective: a literature review," *International Journal of Ethics and Systems* ahead-of-print, no. ahead-of-print (1 Januari 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOES-12-2022-0312>.

<sup>59</sup> Sunaryo dan Jatningsih, "Pandangan Intelektual Terhadap Wacana Kyai Pendukung Khofifah Indar Parawansa Dalam Kontestasi Pemilihan Gubernur Jawa Timur 2018."

<sup>60</sup> Bharudin Che Pa, Siti Arni Basir, dan Shukeri Mohamed, "PERLAKSANAAN SIYASAH SYAR'IYYAH DALAM PENTADBIRAN DI MALAYSIA," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 5, no. 1 (2010): 57–72, <https://fiqh.um.edu.my/index.php/JAT/article/view/8537>.

<sup>61</sup> Nurhadi dan Sunarso, "Peran *Kiai* Dalam Membangun Partisipasi Pemilih."

education and public awareness in the political process.<sup>62</sup> The public must be empowered to make wise political decisions based on accurate and objective information<sup>63</sup> rather than solely following directions from religious figures. Good political education will help the public understand the values of justice, honesty, and integrity in politics<sup>64</sup> and reduce their dependence on religious figures in making political choices.

Furthermore, in the context of *Siyasah Syar'iyah*, *Kiai* has a significant responsibility to balance their roles as moral leaders and political influencers. As moral guardians, *Kiai* must ensure that their political involvement is based on principles of justice, truth, and the common good. They should act as moral advisors, reminding politicians of the importance of fair and ethical policies while avoiding corrupt and harmful political practices.<sup>65</sup> *Kiai*, who can maintain this balance, can become a positive force, guiding politics towards noble goals aligned with Islamic values. The perspective of *Siyasah Syar'iyah* also underscores the importance of accountability and transparency in the political process.<sup>66</sup> *Kiai's* support for politicians must be transparent and accountable, with clear reasons based on considerations of the common good. This process should involve open dialogue with the community to ensure that the support genuinely reflects the people's aspirations and interests. This transparency will help maintain public trust in *Kiai* and religious institutions and strengthen a healthy and responsible democratic process.

Excessive reliance on *Kiai's* support in politics can also pose risks and negative impacts. If politicians depend too heavily on *Kiai's* influence for

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<sup>62</sup> Din, Syed Ismail, dan Raja Sulong, "Combating corruption based on Al-Siyasah al-Syar'iyah perspective: a literature review."

<sup>63</sup> Arif Sugitanata, "Literasi dan Pendidikan Politik dalam Pemilu 2024," *ilmusyariahdoktoral.uin-suka.ac.id*, 12 Februari 2024, <https://ilmusyariahdoktoral.uin-suka.ac.id/id/kolom/detail/768/blog-post.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Arif Sugitanata.

<sup>65</sup> Hasanatul Jannah, "Kyai, Perubahan Sosial dan Dinamika Politik Kekuasaan," *Fikrah* 3, no. 1 (2015): 157–76, <http://journal.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/fikrah/article/download/1831/1599>.

<sup>66</sup> Pa, Basir, dan Mohamed, "Perlaksanaan *Siyasah Syar'iyah* Dalam Pentadbiran Di Malaysia."



support, they may neglect the direct aspirations of the broader society. It can create a gap between political leaders and the people, reducing politicians' accountability to their constituents. Moreover, *Kiai's* support is given purely for political interests without considering the values of justice and truth. In that case, it can undermine public trust in religious institutions and the democratic process itself.

Criticism of the phenomenon of political *silaturahmi* to *Kiai* should be addressed wisely and reflectively. *Kiai* needs to recognize and preserve their role's purity as respected spiritual leaders. Maintaining independence and neutrality from practical politics is crucial to upholding their legitimacy as moral and spiritual figures. *Kiai*, who choose not to engage in practical politics, demonstrate their commitment to maintaining their spiritual integrity and purity. They should continue to serve as moral advisors, providing ethical guidance to the community and politicians without direct involvement in practical politics.

In addressing existing challenges, political education based on Islamic values must be strengthened. This education should emphasize the importance of justice, truth, and the common good in politics. The community needs to be deeply educated on how to choose leaders who are integral and committed to fighting for the people's interests. Additionally, this political education should teach the community to be critical of unethical political practices and encourage their active participation in the democratic process. Thus, the role of *Kiai* in politics can be directed towards higher goals consistent with the principles of *Siyasah Syar'iyah*.

### **C. Conclusion**

The conclusion that can be drawn in the context of the *silaturahmi* of politicians to *Kiai* (Islamic scholars) prior to elections shows that this phenomenon reflects the strategy of politicians to garner electoral support by leveraging the influence of *Kiai* as respected spiritual leaders with extensive

social networks. This practice, although deeply rooted in cultural traditions and regarded as a form of respect, is often used to seek the blessing and moral endorsement of *Kiai*, which is then exploited in political campaigns. However, this approach also invites criticism because it can blur the lines between religion and politics and pose the risk of transactional support that undermines the integrity of *Kiai*. An analysis based on the Elite Theory of Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca reveals how political elites and *Kiai* mutually exploit each other to maintain their power and legitimacy. Meanwhile, from the perspective of *Siyasah Syar'iyah*, it emphasizes the importance of justice, transparency, and balance in the political involvement of *Kiai*. It highlights the need for political education based on Islamic values to empower the community in a healthy democratic process. Therefore, the phenomenon of politicians *silaturahmi* to *Kiai* before elections demonstrates the complexity of the interaction between religion, culture, and politics in Indonesia and how traditional values and the influence of religious figures still play a significant role in shaping the political dynamics in Indonesia.

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