Transformative Islamic Education in Politics: Political Education of Religious Figures in The 2024 Election

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Abstract

Transformative Islamic education focuses on teaching religious values and shaping critical awareness and social responsibility, including in the political context. This study analyzes transformative Islamic education in political education carried out by Islamic religious figures during the 2024 General Election in North Sulawesi. The research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. The sample selection employs purposive sampling, involving 23 informants of Islamic religious figures and Muslim communities from 12 districts/cities in North Sulawesi. Data is collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document studies. The data are analyzed thematically, which includes stages of organizing data, reading the entire data set, coding, identifying key themes, and interpreting the data within the framework of transformative Islamic education theory in the political context. Triangulation is used to ensure the validity of the data. The study's results indicate that transformative Islamic political education by religious figures successfully increased active and responsible political participation and shaped critical political awareness among the Muslim community in North Sulawesi. In addition, the study also found that the Muslim community in North Sulawesi is increasingly aware of the boundaries between religion as a moral guide in politics and religion as a political tool that can be exploited for specific interests. This study has some limitations, such as being limited to the North Sulawesi region, only studying Islamic religious figures, and focusing on the 2024 General Election, which does not yet represent political education outside the election context. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the regional scope, conduct interfaith studies, and analyze political education by religious figures in a broader socio-political context.

Keywords: Transformative Islamic Education; Political Education; Religious Figures; 2024 General Election; North Sulawesi.

Abstrak

Pendidikan Islam transformatif tidak hanya berfokus pada pengajaran nilai-nilai agama, tetapi juga membentuk kesadaran kritis dan tanggung jawab sosial, termasuk dalam konteks politik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pendidikan Islam transformatif dalam pendidikan politik yang dilakukan oleh tokoh agama Islam pada Pemilu 2024 di Sulawesi Utara. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Pemilihan sampel menggunakan purposive sampling yang melibatkan 23 informan yang terdiri dari tokoh agama Islam dan masyarakat Muslim di 12 kabupaten/kota Sulawesi Utara. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi langsung, dan studi dokumen. Data dianalisis secara tematik yang meliputi tahapan mengorganisasi data, membaca keseluruhan data, coding, mengidentifikasi tema utama, serta menginterpretasikan data dalam kerangka teori pendidikan Islam transformatif dalam konteks politik. Triangulasi digunakan untuk memastikan keabsahan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa

pendidikan Islam transformatif dalam pendidikan politik tokoh agama berhasil meningkatkan partisipasi politik yang aktif dan bertanggung jawab, serta membentuk kesadaran politik yang kritis di kalangan masyarakat Muslim Sulawesi Utara. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa masyarakat Muslim Sulawesi Utara semakin menyadari batasan antara agama sebagai pedoman moral dalam politik dan agama sebagai alat politik yang dapat dimanfaatkan untuk kepentingan tertentu. Penelitian ini memiliki beberapa keterbatasan, yaitu terbatas pada wilayah Sulawesi Utara, hanya meneliti tokoh agama Islam, dan berfokus pada Pemilu 2024 sehingga belum menggambarkan pendidikan politik di luar konteks pemilu. Oleh karena itu, penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk memperluas cakupan wilayah, melakukan kajian lintas agama, serta menganalisis pendidikan politik tokoh agama dalam konteks sosial-politik yang lebih luas.

Kata Kunci: *Pendidikan Islam Transformatif; Pendidikan Politik; Tokoh Agama; Pemilu 2024; Sulawesi Utara.*

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, the General Election (*Pemilu*) held on February 14, 2024, stands as a vital pillar of democratic practice, providing citizens the opportunity to directly influence leadership selection and policy direction (Widian, Satya, and Yazid 2023). Despite this democratic potential, electoral processes in various regions continue to grapple with persistent challenges, including low levels of political participation, limited critical awareness among voters, and the politicization of religion for narrow interests (SAMOSIR 2023). Scholarly research such as that conducted by (Hefner 2011, 2016, 2021), (Papastephanou 2008), (Omelicheva and Ahmed 2018), and (Abdullah and Kusaeri 2024) indicates that within Muslim societies, such issues can be addressed through effective political education, particularly when facilitated by trusted religious figures. These leaders often possess moral authority and community influence that enable them to promote informed and ethical political engagement.

Supporting this view, Fernando et al. (2023). highlight the significant role played by Islamic religious leaders in shaping political behavior. Far from being limited to spiritual matters, these leaders often serve as civic educators, guiding communities on political responsibilities grounded in Islamic ethical principles. Arifianto (2024) further emphasizes the effectiveness of religious leaders in fostering political awareness, particularly among Muslim voters.

In the specific context of North Sulawesi, Islamic religious leaders have demonstrated active engagement in this role. Previous studies (Sakai and Fauzia 2014), (Yusuf, Samal, and Harun 2022), Hasrin (Hasrin et al. 2023) and (Nelwan 2022) show that through religious lectures, Friday sermons, and other public forums, these leaders consistently emphasize the importance of political participation informed by Islamic values such as justice, accountability, and public welfare. These findings align with Larson's (2024), observation that political education embedded in Islamic ethics can enhance political consciousness and encourage meaningful participation in democratic processes.

While these studies provide critical insights, they often overlook the specific educational approaches used by religious leaders to convey political messages. Understanding how Islamic teachings are contextualized in political education remains an underexplored area, particularly in regions like North Sulawesi (Mandaville 2020).

To address this gap, the current study adopts transformative Islamic education as its analytical framework. This approach emphasizes not only the transmission of religious knowledge, but also the development of critical consciousness and social responsibility. In doing so, it aligns with the broader goals of civic education and democratic participation. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze how Islamic religious leaders in North Sulawesi applied

transformative Islamic education in their political education efforts during the 2024 General Election.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative methodology using a case study approach. Qualitative research seeks to understand the meanings individuals or groups assign to a particular phenomenon within a specific context. A case study was deemed appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of political education practices carried out by Islamic religious leaders in the context of the 2024 General Election in North Sulawesi (Creswell et al. 2018).

The research was conducted in North Sulawesi and employed purposive sampling to select informants. This technique enabled the researchers to identify individuals with deep knowledge and direct relevance to the study's focus (Creswell et al. 2018). The selection criteria included: (1) involvement in the 2024 General Election in North Sulawesi; (2) experience in delivering political education; (3) active engagement in both religious and political communities; and (4) the ability to provide reflective insights on the intersection of religion and politics. Based on these criteria, 23 informants were selected, comprising 12 Islamic religious leaders and 11 members of civil society from across 12 districts and cities in North Sulawesi.

No.	Initials	Location	Position
1	AA	Manado	Religious Figure
2	BB	Bitung	Religious Figure
3	CC	Minahasa	Religious Figure
4	DD	Minahasa Tenggara	Religious Figure
5	EE	Bolaang Mongondow (Bolmong)	Religious Figure
6	FF	Tomohon	Religious Figure
7	GG	Kotamobagu	Religious Figure
8	HH	Bolmong Utara	Religious Figure
9	II	Bolmong Timur	Religious Figure
10	JJ	Bolmong Selatan	Religious Figure
11	KK	Minahasa Utara	Religious Figure
12	LL	Minahasa Selatan	Religious Figure
13	AAA	Manado	Civil Society
14	BBB	Bitung	Civil Society
15	CCC	Kotamobagu	Civil Society
16	DDD	Bolmong Utara	Civil Society
17	EEE	Bolmong	Civil Society
18	FFF	Tomohon	Civil Society
19	GGG	Bolmong Timur	Civil Society
20	HHH	Minahasa	Civil Society
21	III	Bolmong Selatan	Civil Society
22	JJJ	Minahasa Utara	Civil Society
23	KKK	Minahasa Selatan	Civil Society

Data were gathered through three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with both religious leaders and civil society actors to gain rich, firsthand insights. Observations involved attending and documenting forums where political education was delivered by religious leaders. In addition,

document analysis was performed by reviewing lecture texts, sermon materials, and other relevant documents used in political education activities(Creswell et al. 2018).

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data, following several key stages: organizing raw data, thoroughly reviewing the dataset, developing initial codes, identifying central themes, and interpreting the findings within the theoretical framework of transformative Islamic education. To ensure the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was conducted by cross-verifying information from interviews, observations, and documents. Member checking was also carried out, in which findings were shared with informants for validation and clarification (Creswell et al. 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
The Concept of Transformative Islamic Education in the Political Context

The discussion of transformative Islamic education began in the 1980s (Ali 2017). Regardless of the history of its emergence and development, transformative Islamic education is an educational approach used to teach and deeply understand Islamic teachings, and guides Muslims to apply these teachings in various aspects of their daily lives. Transformative Islamic education focuses on developing people who not only have a deep understanding of religion, but also have a sense of responsibility to build a society based on Islamic values such as justice, humanity and freedom (Papastephanou 2008). The main goal of transformative Islamic education is spiritual (moral) and social change, both at the individual and societal levels (Papastephanou 2008). Thus, this type of education focuses not only on teaching Islamic religious doctrines, but also on empowering Muslims to become responsible agents of change in social life, including politics (Papastephanou 2008).

In the political context, the principles of transformative Islamic education are based on three concepts of Islamic teachings, namely, tawhid (Adeputra Tohis 2024), *khalifah* (Asmendri et al. 2024; Munawir, Alfiana, and Pambayun 2024), and *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (Azizah and Mardiana 2024; Dewia 2020). The principle of tawhid, or the oneness of God, is a fundamental foundation in transformative Islamic education. Tawhid not only teaches obedience to Allah, but also emphasizes the principle of universal justice and equal rights for all humans (Adeputra Tohis 2024). In the political realm, Islamic education that focuses on tawhid encourages Muslims to demand justice and fight all forms of political injustice.

The principle of khalifah, humans as God's representatives on earth, in transformative Islamic education teaches that every human being has the responsibility to maintain a social and political order that is in line with the principles of justice and the common good (Papastephanou 2008). In the political realm, this principle emphasizes the importance of Muslims' active role in political life, at least to ensure that policies and governance serve the interests of society fairly.

The principle of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, inviting goodness and preventing evil, in transformative Islamic education raises awareness that Muslims have a moral (spiritual) responsibility to encourage goodness (*amar ma'ruf*) and prevent evil (*nahi munkar*) in the life of society (Papastephanou 2008). In the political realm, this means that political participation should not be passive. Muslims must be proactive in ensuring that political leaders and policies are always in favor of justice and common welfare.

Based on these principles, transformative Islamic education in the political context has two main objectives, namely increasing active and responsible participation, and forming critical political awareness. Increasing Active and Responsible Participation, that participation in politics is not only a matter of rights, but also obligations. Muslims are encouraged to actively participate in the political process, whether through elections, political organizations, or policy advocacy (Islam 2024). Forming Critical Political Awareness, that transformative Islamic education aims to form Muslims who not only understand the political system or mechanism,

but also have the ability to critically analyze policies, political candidates, and political dynamics. They are expected to be able to see politics not only as an arena of power, but as a means to realize the values of justice, humanity and freedom. For example, in choosing a leader candidate, it is very important to sort out which leaders are honest, fair, in favor of the people, and prioritize the interests of society in general.

Political education is a medium used to achieve the goals of transformative Islamic education in this political context (Suhaimis and Amrizon 2024). The political education in question is the activity of providing training, teaching, or guidance to develop capacity and self-potential carried out both formally and informally as well as directly and indirectly, between the giver of education and the recipient (Levine 2023). In this study, the givers of education are Islamic religious leaders and the recipients of education are Muslim communities. Therefore, the main goal of these religious leaders is to form critical political awareness and increase the active and responsible participation of Muslim communities, which is none other than the embodiment of transformative Islamic education itself (Levine 2023). This concept will be used as a framework or approach to identify and analyze the role of religious leaders in providing political education in the 2024 elections in North Sulawesi.

Political Education of Religious Leaders in the 2024 Election in North Sulawesi

The 2024 election is not only a stage for political candidates (politicians), but also for religious leaders (Widian et al. 2023). As owners of legitimized religious authority in society, religious leaders will play a very important role. They can mobilize the masses, for example to join political campaigns (Azizah 2023). However, as explained by Alexander Arifianto in his recent research, religious leaders are more likely to play a role as providers of political education (Azizah 2023). However, as explained by Alexander Arifianto in his recent research, religious leaders are more likely to play a role as providers of political education: "*As a religious leader in this region, I often provide political education to the Muslim community. Because, as has been explained in the history of Islamic civilization, politics is not a separate arena from religion, but an integral part of religious life*". (AA; Interview: 2024)

This statement shows that the role of religious leaders is not limited to the religious sphere, but also includes political aspects. The same thing was also conveyed by BB, that: "*Islam does not separate between spiritual (moral) and political life, so we, besides acting as spiritual (moral) leaders, are also obliged to provide guidance, especially on how they should act in political life*". (BB; Interview: 2024)

This statement shows that there is an obligation to encourage Muslims to be actively involved in politics. According to CC, "*by doing so, the Muslim community, at least, can ensure that the values of justice, humanity, and freedom, as well as the public interest are prioritized in every policy that will be taken.*" (CC; Interview: 2024) According to DD, "*what religious leaders do in politics is nothing but educating Muslims about their responsibilities as citizens within the framework of Islamic values*". (DD; Interview: 2024) The upholding of Islamic values in politics is not sufficient only through involvement in politics, but also needs to be accompanied by the formation of political awareness (Alvian and Ardhani 2023).

Forming political awareness can be done through various methods, such as lectures, discussions, and dialogues in various media, such as social media Source Theory (Miller 2023). In the context of North Sulawesi, religious leaders tend to use the religious lecture method as a means of political education. According to EE that:

> "Religious lectures in both recitation groups and Friday sermons are used to convey messages about the importance of participation in elections and how to choose leaders in accordance with Islamic teachings". (EE; Interview: 2024)

The messages in these lectures, as explained by FF, "*mostly emphasize the responsibility of Muslims to participate in the political process honestly and responsibly, and to choose candidates who have a vision oriented towards the benefit of the people*". (FF; Interview: 2024)

The materials used are based on the Qur'an, Hadith and Islamic history. According to GG, "*through examples of the historical leadership of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, people are invited to understand the importance of fair and trustworthy leadership*". (GG; Interview: 2024) In addition, as explained by HH that: "*They also often relate the messages or teachings in the Qur'an and Hadith to the contemporary political context. The aim is to further strengthen people's faith, as well as to show how Muslims can contribute positively to today's political life*". (HH; Interview: 2024)

Political education provided through religious lectures has relevance in the lives of North Sulawesi Muslim communities. In the context of increasingly complex socio-political challenges, religious lectures not only play a role in providing spiritual understanding, but also in shaping political awareness based on Islamic values (Rohim 2024). Through lectures, Muslims can understand the concepts of justice, trustworthy leadership, and responsible political participation in accordance with Islamic principles. In addition, a religious approach to political education allows for the delivery of democratic values, human rights, and ethics in a way that is more accessible to the public (El-Moslimany 2018). Thus, political education based on religious lectures is an effective means of forming a society that is more aware of its political rights and obligations, as well as being able to face various challenges of the times with a strong Islamic moral foundation.

Political education through religious lectures can be said to be deliberately designed to form the critical consciousness of Muslims. Critical consciousness allows Muslims to participate more consciously in the political process, not only as voters but also as active political actors. With critical consciousness, Muslims can recognize political interests or agendas that aim to exploit religious sentiments to gain support without regard to the interests of society at large Critical consciousness helps Muslims to play an active role in guarding government policies so that they are in line with the values of justice and common welfare, and encourage positive social change.

The response of the Muslim community to the formation of critical consciousness through religious lectures by North Sulawesi religious leaders was generally positive. According to II, "many felt enlightened after attending the lectures, especially in terms of understanding their responsibilities as voters, and the importance of choosing visionary candidates". (II; Interview: 2024) This was possible because the messages linking politics with Islamic teachings were considered relevant and insightful. However, as JJ explains, "there are still a small number of people who are apathetic towards politics". (JJ; Interview: 2024) According to KK, "this apathy is often due to a sense of disappointment with political conditions that tend to be corrupt and not transparent". (KK; Interview: 2024) This disappointment can be said to be natural. However, as LL explains:

> "This does not mean that the Muslim community should avoid political life, it should be involved and change it. Therefore, we continue to try to provide an understanding that emphasizes that politics, if carried out with the ethical values taught in Islam, can be a means to realize social justice and the benefit of the people". (LL; Interview: 2024)

In general, the political education delivered by the religious leaders was well received by the people of North Sulawesi.

The effectiveness of political education provided by religious leaders in the 2024 elections in North Sulawesi

The effectiveness of political education provided by religious leaders in the 2024 elections in North Sulawesi can be measured through information from the community. Because the community is the direct recipient of this education. As participants or parties involved, their knowledge, views, experiences, and political attitudes and behaviors reflect the real impact of the political education that has been provided.

Political education through religious lectures has provided an understanding of the relationship between religion and politics, increased active participation and shaped the critical awareness of North Sulawesi Muslims. According to AAA, "*he has participated in several lectures by religious leaders that discuss religion and politics, including elections from an Islamic perspective*". (AAA; Interview: 2024) This education provides new knowledge and experiences for Muslims, as seen in BBB's statement, that "*after attending the lectures, he began to understand that his responsibility as a voter is not only social, but also a religious (moral) obligation*". (BBB; Interview: 2024)

Religious leaders' explanations of the relationship between Islamic teachings and political obligations such as voting in elections are often based on or cite verses from the Qur'an and hadith. This, according to CCC, "*provides a strong theological basis for us to see elections as part of a spiritual (moral) obligation*". (CCC; Interview: 2024) In addition, religious leaders also use a simple and contextual approach in explaining political issues. According to DDD that: "*Exposure to the problems of corruption, injustice, and poor public services, are often linked or confronted with the principles of justice ('adl) and responsibility (amanah)*". (DDD; Interview: 2024)

With this method, political issues become more understandable and relevant, especially in the context of everyday life. So that Muslims can connect political issues with the spiritual (moral) values they hold.

With this method, political issues become more understandable and relevant, especially in the context of everyday life. So that Muslims can connect political issues with the spiritual (moral) values they hold:

> "Religious leaders often link the responsibility to vote with Islamic teachings which emphasize that electing good leaders is a way to establish justice in society". (EEE; Interview: 2024)

This message not only enhances Muslims' political participation, but also reinforces their belief that voting is part of their social and spiritual (moral) responsibility. Thus, religion becomes a powerful source of inspiration in encouraging Muslim voters to actively participate in elections.

Such influence also increases Muslims' political awareness, for example in determining the candidates they will vote for. According to FFF that:

> "After attending lectures from religious leaders who discussed the importance of integrity and the values of justice in politics, he began to be more critical in assessing the candidates to be elected. Previously, the popularity factor may have been the main consideration, but now there is more focus on the track record and values promoted by these candidates". (FFF; Interview: 2024)

The influence of religious leaders' political education does not stop there. Through religious lectures, North Sulawesi Muslims are more motivated to find out more about the candidates' programs and visions. This is because, as explained by GGG that:

> "Religious leaders not only discuss the spiritual (moral) aspects of voting, but also provide a critical view of the political programs offered by the candidates. With this view, at least, we can understand the possible impact of their (the candidates') policies on our daily lives". (GGG; Interview: 2024)

Overall, political education from religious leaders does shape the Muslim community into a more critical, actively participating electorate that makes the connection between politics and Islamic teachings. However, as HHH explains that:

> "Although religion and politics can be intertwined, there are limits that need to be maintained. Religion should indeed be a moral guide in choosing candidates and guarding policies, but it should not be used as a political tool for one-sided interests". (HHH; Interview: 2024)

This statement reflects a balanced understanding between the importance of morality in politics and an awareness of the risks of politicizing religion. Religion serves as a moral compass that directs voters to judge candidates based on values of justice, humanity and freedom, not as a partisan political instrument.

In addition, as explained by III, "*there are still a small number of people who are apathetic towards politics*". (III; Interview: 2024) According to JJJ, "*this apathy is due to a sense of disappointment with political conditions that tend to be corrupt and not transparent*". (JJJ; Interview: 2024) This disappointment can be said to be natural. However, as KKK explains:

> ""This does not mean that the Muslim community should avoid political life, it should be involved and change it. Therefore, we continue to try to provide an understanding that emphasizes that politics, if carried out with the ethical values taught in Islam, can be a means of realizing social justice and the benefit of the people". (KKK; Interview: 2024)

The statements above show that religious leaders have succeeded in providing political education. Thus, the Muslim community of North Sulawesi has become more aware and critical of their political responsibilities, where their participation in elections is not only a matter of exercising their right to vote, but also as part of their religious obligations. This awareness certainly gives Muslims confidence that the choices they make are based on the values of justice, humanity and freedom (Saada 2023). This is a manifestation of the effectiveness of political education of religious leaders in the 2024 elections in North Sulawesi.

Discussion
Analysis of Transformative Islamic Education in Political Education of Muslim Religious Leaders in the 2024 Election in North Sulawesi

As explained earlier, transformative Islamic education in the political context aims to increase active and responsible participation to the community, while building critical political awareness. With this approach, Muslim communities are encouraged to be actively involved in the political process with full awareness and responsibility. This theoretical framework will be used as the basis for analysis in this study.

Increasing Active and Responsible Participation

In the political context, transformative Islamic education emphasizes that participation in politics is not only a matter of rights, but also a spiritual (moral) obligation. Muslims are encouraged to actively participate in the political process, whether through elections, political organizations, or policy advocacy.

Based on the explanation above, it appears that religious lectures delivered by religious leaders have succeeded in arousing the spirit of political participation of North Sulawesi Muslims. Informant BBB, for example, stated that participation in the 2024 elections is not only a social duty, but also a form of religious (moral) obligation that must be fulfilled. Religious lectures conveying messages about fair and responsible leaders succeeded in convincing voters that electing good leaders is one way to realize justice and social welfare.

Religious leaders use simple and contextualized methods to relate Islamic teachings to the everyday political conditions faced by Muslim communities (Adeoye, Baharun, and Munawwaroh 2025; Deng et al. 2023; Eva et al. 2019). Issues of corruption, poor public services and injustice are linked and confronted with Islamic values of justice and trustworthiness (Alfonso, Gharesifard, and Wehn 2022; Mu'min 2023; Sutisna and Khori 2024). With this, political education delivered by religious leaders becomes more relevant and easy to understand, so that Muslim voters are more motivated to be actively involved and responsible in the 2024 elections in North Sulawesi.

Thus, the political education provided by religious leaders has created a space for participation that is not only based on political rights, but also rooted in Islamic spiritual (moral) obligations.

Building Critical Political Awareness

In the context of politics, transformative Islamic education aims to form Muslims who not only understand the political system or mechanism, but also have the ability to critically analyze policies, political candidates, and political dynamics. They are expected to be able to see politics not only as an arena of power, but as a means to realize the values of justice, humanity and freedom.

Based on the statements of various informants above, it appears that political education delivered by religious leaders has inspired the North Sulawesi Muslim community to see politics deeply and critically. Informant AAA, for example, stated that they had attended several lectures that linked Islamic teachings to the obligation to elect fair leaders. Then there was informant FFF's statement, who stated that after attending religious lectures, their focus in choosing prospective leaders changed from merely considering popularity to looking at candidates' track records and integrity.

This statement reflects that the political education of religious leaders has instilled a critical consciousness among North Sulawesi Muslim voters. They will not easily accept even the most popular candidates, and begin to criticize these candidates based on the values of justice ('adl) and responsibility (amanah). This critical consciousness is the main pillar encouraged by transformative Islamic education where politics is seen as a platform to uphold the values of justice, humanity and freedom.

Furthermore, this critical thinking also encourages North Sulawesi Muslim communities to avoid the politicization of religion. As stated by informant HHH, that although religion has a role in guiding people to choose good candidates, they realize that there are limits so that religion is not used as a political tool by certain groups. This awareness shows a deep

understanding of the role of religion as a moral guide and not as a political instrument that can be manipulated for political gain. From this, it can be emphasized that the political education of religious leaders has succeeded in increasing active and responsible participation and shaping the critical political awareness of the North Sulawesi Muslim community.

Both findings consistently show that political education through the transformative Islamic education approach provided by religious leaders in North Sulawesi is able to encourage active and responsible participation of Muslims in the political sphere. This participation is not only interpreted as a democratic right, but also as a spiritual obligation, rooted in Islamic ethics and teachings. This is in line with the goal of transformative Islamic education, namely, the development of people who not only have a deep understanding of religion, but also have a sense of responsibility to build a society based on Islamic values such as justice, humanity and freedom (Huda et al. 2024; Ma`arif et al. 2024, 2025). Islamic education that encourages the active involvement of people in elections, as stated by informant BBB, reflects the actualization of humanizing education, as developed by Paulo Freire, namely education that raises socio-political awareness as part of self and community liberation (Saada 2023).

Furthermore, the contextualized, simple way of delivering religious messages and connecting political realities such as corruption and public services with Islamic values shows an approach that is in accordance with the transformative Islamic education framework developed by Moeslim Abdurahman, where religiosity is not separated from contemporary socio-political dynamics (Saada 2023). In this case, political education is not present as a rigid discourse, but rather as a means of forming responsible Muslim citizens who are aware of the impact of politics on social justice.

As for the formation of critical political awareness, it appears that Muslims in North Sulawesi have begun to show a transformation in political thinking. As revealed by informants AAA and FFF, voters now not only rely on the popularity of candidates, but consider the track record, integrity and moral values of candidates. This affirms Freire's critical pedagogy theory on the importance of forming individuals who are able to critically assess reality and act based on high ethical values (Freire 1970). In the Islamic context, this approach parallels the concept of islah (social improvement) taught in the Islamic scholarly tradition, where leaders should be seen by their ability to realize maslahah (public good) and 'adl (justice) (Voll 1983).

The criticism of the politicization of religion that emerged from HHH informants also shows the level of political maturity and ethical awareness of the people. This supports the results of research conducted by Sakai and Fauzia (2014), Yusuf, Samal, and Harun (2022), Hasrin et al (2023) and Nelwan (2022) which emphasize that religion should be a source of public ethics, not just a political instrument. When people realize the boundary between religious morality and political exploitation, then religious education has succeeded in encouraging the formation of a healthy and rational political culture (Abdullah 2014; Dasopang, Adam, and Nasution 2022; Ferine et al. 2021).

Overall, these two findings prove that transformative Islamic education delivered by religious leaders has succeeded in increasing active and responsible political participation, as well as forming critical political awareness among North Sulawesi Muslim communities. These findings, it can be said, provide a new dimension and understanding, especially for the North Sulawesi Muslim community, that creating politics based on the values of justice, humanity and freedom is the collective responsibility of Muslims.

CONCLUSION

The main findings in this study are as follows: First, political education through transformative Islamic education has increased the active and responsible participation of Muslim communities. Through lectures and discussions, religious leaders emphasize that political involvement is a right and a moral obligation in Islam, so people are encouraged to exercise their voting rights responsibly. Secondly, this education has also shaped critical political awareness, where people do not just vote. Still, it can also evaluate political candidates based on Islamic values, such as the value of justice *('adl)*, trustworthiness, and concern for the welfare of the people. This awareness prevents voters from being trapped in identity politics that relies solely on religious sentiments without considering the integrity and competence of prospective leaders. Thus, these findings confirm that transformative Islamic education is the main approach in political education conducted by religious leaders in the 2024 elections in North Sulawesi.

However, this study has several limitations: First, it was only conducted in North Sulawesi, so the results cannot be generalized to other regions in Indonesia that may have different socio-political contexts. Secondly, this research only focuses on Islamic religious leaders, so it has not explained how political education is carried out by spiritual leaders of other religions, whereas in the context of plural Indonesian politics, interfaith interaction in political education is also essential to be studied further. Third, this research focuses only on the 2024 elections, so it cannot explain how the pattern of political education by religious leaders takes place outside the election momentum. Fourth, this research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach, which provides an in-depth understanding but does not provide quantitative data that can statistically measure the impact of political education on changes in the political attitudes of North Sulawesi Muslim communities.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to expand the study's geographical scope in order to provide a broader picture of how political education of religious leaders develops in various regions with different socio-political dynamics. In addition, cross-religious comparative studies need to be conducted, in order to understand the role of political education carried out by religious leaders from various religious backgrounds. Furthermore, the use of quantitative methods, such as surveys or social experiments, is recommended so that the impact of political education can be measured more objectively. Finally, future research should not only focus on election moments, but also analyze how political education of religious leaders takes place in everyday life outside of electoral momentum. Thus, it is hoped that future research can provide broader, more accurate and relevant insights into the role of transformative Islamic education in building political awareness of Muslim communities in Indonesia.

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