

# POSITIVE BUT NOT SIGNIFICANT: THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAMIC IDENTITY PARTY AMONG FIRST-TIME VOTERS ELECTORAL PREFERENCES THROUGH CONJOINT EXPERIMENT

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## Abstract

Is religious identity considered important by first-time voters? This study aims to show the characteristics that first-time voters prefer from legislative candidates. Through the conjoint experiment method, this study found that religious identity through parties has a positive but insignificant impact on first-time voters. Several factors that are significant in influencing the prediction results are educational attainment, non-religious party identity, place of residence, experience status, age, and *blusukan*. In contrast, this study did not find significant factors in how candidates conduct campaigns such as the number of billboards, frequency of appearances on social media, and interactions on social media did not show a significant influence.

**Keywords:** Religious identity, conjoint experiment, first-time voters.



## **A. Introduction**

The influence of religious identity on political behavior can be observed across multiple dimensions, including religious identity, political polarization, and the role of religious leaders in shaping election outcomes. In Indonesia, for example, the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election highlighted a stark divide in voter behavior along religious lines. Muslim voters showed marked opposition to the Christian candidate, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), while non-Muslim voters largely supported him. This polarization underscores the important role that religion plays in shaping voter blocs and influencing election outcomes in Indonesian politics (Sumaktoyo, 2021).

Furthermore, the relationship between Islamic religiosity and electoral participation has been explored in Western Europe, where factors such as mosque attendance and religious identification have been found to influence voter turnout among Muslim citizens. Hostile national environments, such as exclusionary policies, can further complicate this relationship, suggesting that the context in which Muslims live can either support or hinder their political engagement (Kollar, 2023). In Nigeria, the interaction between religion and voting behavior is also evident. Research has shown that religious affiliation significantly influences electoral decisions, with a clear divide between Christian and Muslim voters shaping the political landscape. The 2019 presidential election in Nigeria is a case in point, as religious divisions remained

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substantial, influencing voting patterns across the country (Ojo, 2020). Furthermore, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and its intersection with political behavior has been documented, suggesting that religious considerations often guide voters' voting decisions (Agbor, 2019). This is reinforced by evidence from the 2015 presidential election, which showed that while religion appeared to be important during the pre-election period, other factors such as candidate profiles ultimately took precedence on election day, suggesting a complex relationship between religion and electoral decisions (Onapajo, 2016). Strategic framing of religious identity in political communication is used to increase candidate electability (Nasution et al., 2020). This phenomenon is not unique to Indonesia; In various contexts, religious leaders have played a significant role in mobilizing voters and shaping political narratives that align with the beliefs and values of their constituents (Almanduri & Bakti, 2022). Furthermore, theoretical frameworks around the interaction of religion and political behavior suggest that religious ideology serves as a heuristic for voters, guiding their choices in a manner similar to party affiliation or candidate support (Pepinsky et al., 2012). This heuristic function of religion can be particularly salient in societies where religious identity is closely tied to political affiliation, as seen in Indonesia and Nigeria. On the other hand, many question whether religious factors are a primary determinant of whether or not to vote for a candidate. The thesis on the power of religious influence, particularly in the context of the country with the largest Muslim population in Indonesia, needs further study because it does not necessarily apply to explaining

voters in general as a consistent pattern.

On the other hand, the argument that Islam does not have a significant impact on voter behavior is supported by a number of studies highlighting the complex interplay between religion and electoral choice. A large body of research suggests that while religious identity can influence political preferences, it does not necessarily dictate voter behavior on election day. For example, a study focused on the 2015 Nigerian presidential election found that while religion played a significant role in the pre-election period, it was less significant in the actual voting decision, with factors such as candidate profile and performance taking precedence (Onapajo, 2016). This suggests that voters may prioritize pragmatic considerations over religious affiliation when casting their ballots. In this context, Nigeria's polarized population with Muslim and Christian voters should be a factor, as Muslim and Christian voters are divided along religious lines. Furthermore, research conducted in Indonesia has revealed declining support for Islamic parties, attributed to their focus on religious ideology rather than pragmatic policies (Nurjaman, 2023). This trend suggests that voters are increasingly evaluating candidates based on their policies and leadership qualities rather than their religious affiliation. Furthermore, comparative analysis of voting behavior in Muslim-majority countries shows that voter turnout tends to be lower in contexts where Islamic teachings are more entrenched in politics, suggesting that the presence of a strong religious ideology may not translate into electoral success

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(Stockemer & Khazaeli, 2013).

The behavior of Muslim-American voters who attended mosques during the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections found that while cultural and religious traditions influenced their social conservatism, their actual voting patterns were heavily influenced by the external political context, such as perceptions of the Iraq War (Patterson et al., 2011). This highlights the idea that while religion can shape certain attitudes, it does not necessarily determine electoral outcomes. Furthermore, the legitimacy of political Islam has waned, with voters increasingly disillusioned with the performance of Islamic parties and their inability to effectively address pressing political issues (Hamayotsu, 2011). This decline in electoral support for Islamic parties is further evidenced by the declining vote share of these parties in general elections, indicating a shift in voter priorities from religious ideology to more secular and pragmatic considerations (Jahan & Shahan, 2013; Aclandea, 2024). In short, while Islam may play a role in shaping the political landscape, its direct impact on voter behavior appears to be limited. Voters often prioritize pragmatic issues over religious affiliation, as evidenced by numerous studies across contexts. This trend suggests increasing sophistication among voters, who are increasingly likely to evaluate candidates based on their policies and effectiveness rather than their religious identity.

However, a question remains, what about legislative elections where there are so many choices that it is nearly impossible for people to compare each

candidate individually? This question is interesting because various studies that have tried to answer the question of the influence of religion on choosing a candidate have focused more on debates between figures (see Sumaktoyo, 2021). This problem is a simple problem by comparing several candidates such as mayoral elections, the variables being compared will be easier because voters focus on a few choices. Meanwhile, in legislative elections, there are more candidates with various choices. By assuming the many choice variables faced by voters, the causal relationship between religious identity factors and voter choices will be clearer (look for shared assumptions). This study attempts to test the religious identity factor with various variables including religious identity. This study uses a survey experiment which is a core tool for causal inference. This study used a concurrent research design that allows researchers to estimate the causal effects of multiple treatment components and assess multiple causal hypotheses simultaneously (Hainmueller, 2017).

## **B. Theoretical Review**

### **Personal Attributes in First-Time Voters Behavior**

In the context of an PR open-list system like in Indonesia, where voters have the freedom to choose individual candidates from existing parties, candidate characteristics play an important role in the electoral process. The winner in a political election is determined by the order of candidates on the party list, based on the number of individual votes received by each candidate. Although this system provides wide freedom to voters, as candidates from the same party

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compete against each other for votes, it can lead to fierce internal competition and possibly also divisions between parties.

In an attempt to gain voter support, candidates tend to emphasize their personal appeal. This can include their track record in delivering public services in their area, as well as their leadership qualities such as relevant background and experience. Efforts are also made to build a strong personal reputation in the eyes of voters. On the other hand, candidates also often highlight party appeals, such as the party's overall track record, policy programs offered, and the competence of the leadership team (Norris, 2004).

Islamic based identity here defined as party type for variable. Indonesia's parties are categorized into four groups according to their ideology (Baswedan 2004, Tanuwidjaja, 2010). Exclusively secular are parties that firmly reject Islamic-inspired political agendas. In contrast, secular-inclusive parties are open to accommodating Islamic-inspired agendas. However, both groups reject the idea of an Islamic state. The Inclusive Islamic Party is a party that has the Pancasila ideology but is very closely related to Islamic mass organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). They promote pluralism and reject the establishment of an Islamic state. Lastly, Islamists openly or implicitly agree with the establishment of an Islamic state. Among the parties that participated in the 2004 elections, the PDI-P is considered exclusively secular, Demokrat, Gerindra, and NasDem are inclusively secular, PAN and PKB



inclusively Islamic, and PKS, PBB, PPP, and PBR are Islamist. The only clear distinction is Baswedan and Tanuwijaya's party type. Meanwhile, other party types such as Gunther and Diamond's (2003) catch-all, programmatic, and personalistic are more difficult to distinguish between parties. Thus, Baswedan's (2004) party type is more likely to distinguish parties in Indonesia.

Personal attributes are a crucial factor in open-list PR systems. Attributes such as regional origin and previous electoral experience provide voters with a substantial indication of politicians' knowledge of and commitment to local needs (Shugart, 2005). The core of this argument is, open-list PR provides significant benefits to several entities in the election, such Educational attainment, age, experience status, and residency (Horiuchi et, al 2022). Candidates have the opportunity to maximize their characteristics, such as voicing local issues and tailoring their campaigns to the characteristics of the local population (Blumenau et al., 2017; Bräuninger, 2021; Jankowski, 2016). Education can enhance a candidate's electability as it is often associated with increased competence (Sirait, et al. 2022).

Personal attributes: age, experience, residency, and educational background by Horiuchi et al 2020 are the first variable that can be tested. Regarding age, first-time voters will choose candidates who are close in age to them; this means there is an assumption that they will understand the needs of those who live with the same conditions. The theoretical expectations that

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placed on the age variable are based on the expectation that voters will tend to choose those who are close in age. So, the baseline of the age argument is that the closer the candidate's age is to the voter, the greater the possibility of voting.

Regarding experience, candidates who have had previous political roles such as in regional administrations. Politicians who have served in regional positions — which is an important measure of local ties and experience — are found more at the district level serving local communities rather than at the larger, public relations level. This is in line with expectations. The assumption is that those who have experience will be able to work well compared to those who have no experience.

Regarding educational backgrounds, candidates who have a higher education level will be considered more educated. Arceneaux et al (2023) found evidence that candidates with higher levels of education win more votes than candidates with lower levels of education, even after we account for standard indicators of candidate quality and campaign spending. Candidate's education level as a predictor of voter confidence that candidates with a higher level of education will be more likely to be voted.

While politicians can adjust their behavior to increase electoral appeal, there are limitations in changing more objective attributes. Campaign mechanisms are set up to convey political messages to voters, but more fundamental personal attributes

cannot always be manipulated easily (Shugart, 2005). Therefore, this study directs its focus on how these attributes are considered and influence the behavior of voters, especially first-time voters, in the context of an open-list PR system.

However, It is important to consider the social media factor in young voters' electoral influence on candidate characteristics. Based on Ghergina's (2016) research, it is revealed that there are different causal mechanisms for young voters being influenced by election campaigns or by their own attitudes before the campaign. Those who trust politicians, find their campaigns informative, and actively use social media, tend to be influenced by election campaigns on social media platforms.

Political information obtained through social media is much more likely to influence first-time voters than traditional news channels (Wolfsfeld, Yarchi and Samuel-Azran, 2016, Howard et al., 2011; Enikolopov et al., 2020; Fergusson and Molina, 2021 Sides et al., 2020, Lee and Oh, 2012) or traditional ways such a billboard (Tshuma, 2021; Ezegwu et al 2015; Inobemhe et al).

These literature show that the debate between conventional and digital political campaigns is still ongoing. Some experts argue that digital campaigns are more effective than conventional campaigns, while other experts argue that conventional campaigns are still effective. The selection of the right type of campaign depends on certain factors, such as voter

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targets, campaign budgets, and campaign strategies.

**Table 1 Attributes of Candidate**

Variable	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	
Social Media Content Frequently Appearance	Rare	Most		
Social Media Interaction	Rare	Most interacted		
Numbers of Billboard	Rare	Most		
<i>Blusukan</i>	Rare	Most		
Age	21-30	31-40	>41	
Experience	Newcomer	Incumbent		
Educational attainment	High school	Bachelor's degree	Postgraduate	
Local Residency	Next home	Next subdistrict	Next district	
Party type	Nationalist (PDI-P)	Nationalist Islam (Golkar, Demokrat)	Islam nationalist (PAN, PKB)	Islamist (PKS)

### C. Data and Method

In political science, Conjoint experiments allow researchers to identify nonparametrically to estimate the causal effects of many components simultaneously (Similar to real-world elections, in the Hainmueller (2014) experiment, respondents are given candidate profiles and then asked to decide on their electability. Conjoint analysis describes the decision maker's choice among a set of alternatives based on their utility values. The choices or responses are nominal data and respondents choose the one with the highest (maximum) utility value.

To ensure that the choices of first-time voters are in accordance with their actual behavior, this study uses

the conjoint experiment method. The advantage of the conjoint experiment method over surveys other than conjoint is that it can present limited choices that condition voters to continue to vote based on what they want. Conjoint experiment techniques are commonly used to evaluate voter preferences for politicians' attributes and policy positions (e.g., Franchino and Zucchini, 2015; Carnes and Lupu, 2016; Horiuchi, 2016).

In April 2024 or two months after the general election in Indonesia, I ran a conjoint experiment. An online sample of Indonesian students in eastern Jakarta, the country's most populous metropolitan city, was used for the survey to capture a range of political backgrounds and perspectives. I chose to collect data using a sample I drew from a public school. Seven hundred and sixty-nine completed the task in my combined experiment. They evaluated ten pairs of candidates sequentially, each time being asked to choose between two different profiles of attributes that characterize each candidate. Suppose they were presented with two candidates, both candidates having the same variables of education, religious party identity, place of residence, leadership experience status but differing in age. Which candidate did they choose?

The decision made by those who responded to my survey was the relevant outcome variable. To categorize their responses to my question about candidate choice, I created a binary variable of vote or no vote. A value of one means the respondent supports the candidate, and a value of zero means no vote.

Figure 1 Questionnaire

Jika pemilu dilaksanakan hari ini, mana calon anggota DPR RI yang anda pilih ?

VARIABLE	CANDIDATE A	CANDIDATE B
FYP	Jarang	Jarang
Live Tiktok	Sering	Sering
Pendidikan	S1	SMA
Partai	PKB	PDIP
Usia	41 ke atas	21 - 30
Blusukan	Sering	Sering
Status Jabatan	Sudah menjabat	Pendatang baru
Banner Pinggir Jalan	Banyak	Banyak
Tempat Tinggal	Tetangga	Tetangga
VARIABLE	CANDIDATE A	CANDIDATE B
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Kandidat A		
<input type="radio"/> Kandidat B		

My data contained 16,898 evaluated profiles, or 8,459 pairs of the total respondents. The data was then processed through AMCE, a statistical method established by Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto (2014) applied to the analysis of the collected data to estimate the average marginal component effect (AMCE) of each attribute on the likelihood that a candidate will be selected. This is done by averaging all possible combinations of the candidate’s other attributes.

D. Results

The results of the main outcome of the conjoint experiment of interest, candidate selection, are reported in Figure 1, which shows AMCE estimates of the probability of being selected. There are several values in each attribute that have a significant influence on the reference category (Education, Party, Status, Age, and direct contact) both positive and negative influences, but there are also those that do not have sufficient

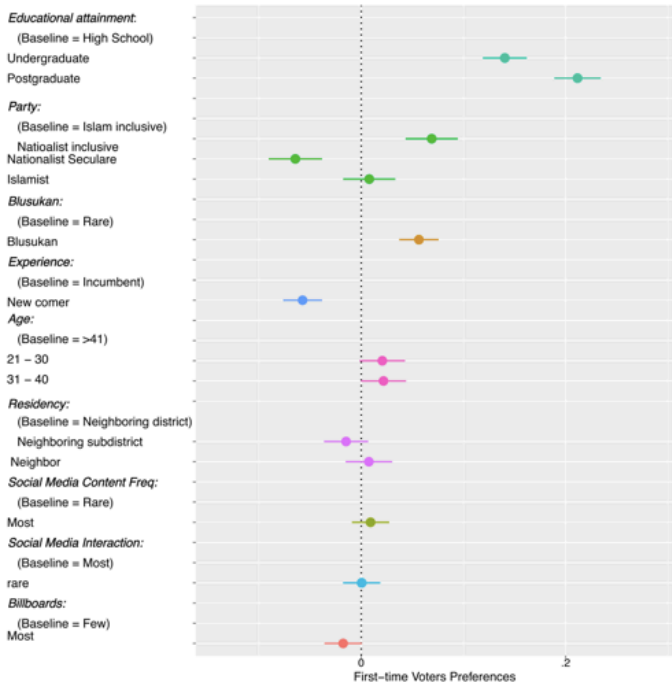
values to get a significant predicate (Billboard, Reply, FYP).

The advantage of conjoint experiment is that everything is simultaneously compared against its own baseline. The baseline value set to 0 makes the interpretation of analysis results easier and more intuitive. Each AMCE (Average Marginal Component Effect) value for another attribute level can be interpreted as a change in preferences relative to the baseline. Positive values indicate greater preferences than the baseline, while negative values indicate smaller preferences. As a note and punctuation, in conjoint experiment, each variable is compared to the baseline rather than comparing the relative strength between variables.

Table 1 AMCE Result

	Estimate	Std. Err	Pr(> z )	Sig
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	0	NA		
<b>Base: High School</b>				
Undergraduate	0.140	0.010	1.377158e-37	***
Postgraduate	0.211	0.011	7.016389e-75	***
<b>Party</b>	0	NA		
<b>Base: Islam Inclusive</b>				
Nationalist inclusive	0.061	0.013	0.0000030420	***
Islamist	0.007	0.012	0.5436582	
Nationalist Secular	-0.072	0.013	0.000000157013	***
<b>Recidency</b>	0			
<b>Base: Next subdistrict</b>				
Neighbor	0.022	0.011	0.048567	*
Next district	0.014	0.011	0.1775	
<b>Experience</b>	0	NA		
<b>Base: Incumbent</b>				
New comer	-0.057	0.009	0.00000000394	***
<b>Age</b>	0	NA		
<b>Base: &gt;41</b>				
Age: 31 - 40	0.021	0.012	0.0466714	*
Age: 21 - 30	0.020	0.012	0.0385673	*
<b>Blusukan</b>	0	NA		
<b>Base: Rare</b>				

<i>Blusukan</i>	0.056	0.009	0.00000000	***
			864	
<b>Billboard</b>	0	NA		
<b>Base: rare</b>				
Billboard: Most Frequent	-0.017	0.009	0.05729	
<b>Social Media Frequently</b>	0	NA		
<b>Appearance</b>				
<b>Base: rare</b>				
Most Frequently appear	0.009	0.009	0.328667	
<b>Social media interaction</b>	0	NA		
<b>Base: most interacted</b>				
Rare	0.0004	0.009	0.96040070	
			00	



The table explains the Education variable as one of the main factors that has a significant influence on the variables studied. The results of the study show that individuals with undergraduate education provide a more positive contribution than individuals with secondary education, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.140 with a very high level of significance ( $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that the chances of individual success increase significantly with the achievement of a higher level of education. In addition, individuals with



postgraduate education show a greater influence, with a coefficient of 0.211 and the same high level of significance ( $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, the higher a person's level of education, the greater their chances of contributing significantly to the variables studied. This finding underlines the importance of higher education in providing a positive influence on a person's success in the context of this study. Education not only functions as a means to improve skills and knowledge, but also as a factor that increases the chances of success in various aspects of life. In this study, the results of the analysis show that political affiliation also has different effects on the variables studied, which provides an overview of how political party ideology can affect the appeal and effectiveness of candidates in a broader political context.

Candidates from inclusive nationalist parties show a very significant positive effect on the variables studied. With a coefficient of 0.061 and a very high level of significance ( $p < 0.001$ ), these results indicate that affiliation with an inclusive nationalist party provides substantial benefits for candidates in gaining public support or in achieving broader goals.

Why is that? Inclusive nationalist parties tend to promote policies that are more in favor of broader groups in society, such as increasing national unity and reducing political polarization. This can make candidates affiliated with this party more attractive to voters who want political stability and social integration. Candidates from this party may also be more successful in designing campaign strategies that are able to reach various segments of society, both

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highly educated and low-educated.

In contrast, candidates from secular nationalist parties show a significant negative effect, with a coefficient of -0.072 and a very high level of significance ( $p < 0.001$ ). This result suggests that affiliation with a secular nationalist party actually has the potential to hinder a candidate's chances of success in the election.

Why does this happen? Secular nationalist parties tend to promote an agenda that is more separate from religion and politics, which can make them lose support from more religious or conservative groups. In addition, their positions that tend to be more neutral in terms of religious or cultural ideology may not have the same emotional appeal as parties that are more based on a particular ideology, either religious or cultural. This can also contribute to a lack of voter engagement or enthusiasm for candidates from these parties, reducing the effectiveness of their campaigns.

Meanwhile, Islamist parties that focus on religious identity have a positive but insignificant effect in this study, although they may have strong appeal among certain segments of voters. This may indicate that in a more pluralistic or more pragmatic political context, purely ideological factors, such as religious affiliation, do not always have a major influence on voter decisions. Candidates from Islamic parties do not show a significant influence on the variables studied, with a coefficient of 0.007 and a p-value of 0.543, which is far from the expected level of significance. This means that affiliation with Islamic parties does not have a strong enough impact in influencing the results

studied.

What explains this phenomenon? One potential reason is that in the context of this study, voters may be more concerned with other factors that are more important than religious ideology. Although Islamist parties have a strong base of support among certain groups, in this study, religious political affiliation does not appear to be significant enough to influence the overall results. This may also reflect that to some extent, voters are more concerned with candidate competence or other pragmatic factors, such as ability to govern or economic policy, than with religious identity alone.

It is important to note that while political affiliation in general can influence election outcomes or campaign effectiveness, not all types of affiliation have the same impact. The positive impact demonstrated by candidates from inclusive nationalist parties highlights how policies that unite and embrace more groups can increase a candidate's appeal. On the other hand, secular nationalist parties, despite promoting a more moderate or religiously free ideology, appear to have difficulty gaining broad support among voters.

In the context of this study, political affiliation is shown to play a very important role in influencing the results studied. Inclusive nationalist parties have a significant positive impact, reflecting the appeal of a more inclusive and unified political strategy. In contrast, affiliation with a secular nationalist party shows a significant negative effect, while affiliation with an Islamist party does not show a strong enough effect. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to

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party ideology and strategy in understanding how political affiliation affects election results or candidate success.

Geographical factors or the proximity of the candidate's residence to voters are also one aspect that influences the results. Candidates from neighboring areas show a significant positive effect with a coefficient of 0.022 and a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ . This indicates that geographical proximity provides certain advantages for candidates, perhaps due to emotional closeness or ease of communication access. In contrast, candidates from other districts do not show a significant effect, with a coefficient of 0.014 and  $p = 0.177$ . This indicates that geographical distance can be an obstacle for candidates to build strong relationships with voters. Therefore, geographical proximity is an important factor that must be considered in campaign strategies.

Candidate experience also shows a significant effect on the results. Candidates who are running for the first time (newcomers) have a significant negative effect with a coefficient of -0.057 and a significance level of  $p < 0.001$ . This shows that incumbents have a big advantage compared to newcomers, perhaps because incumbents already have a solid support base and a track record that is known to voters. Experience is one of the factors that gives voters more trust, thus providing a significant advantage for incumbents.

In terms of age, candidates aged 31–40 years have a significant positive influence, with a coefficient of 0.021 and a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ . The same applies to candidates aged 21–30 years, with a

coefficient of 0.020 and a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ . However, the influence is relatively small compared to other factors. Younger age tends to provide certain advantages, perhaps because they are considered more energetic, innovative, or close to the aspirations of the younger generation. However, candidates over the age of 41 years were used as a comparison category, and the results showed that younger age provided a slight advantage.

Campaign strategy doesn't play important role in influencing the results, yet, their direct attendance among people plays important role. One of the most effective strategies is *blusukan* or direct visits to the community. Candidates who frequently do *blusukan* have a positive coefficient of 0.056 with a very high level of significance ( $p < 0.001$ ). This shows that a direct approach to voters is one of the most effective ways to build relationships and increase the chances of success. In contrast, the use of outdoor advertising media such as billboards does not have a significant effect on the variables studied, with a negative coefficient of -0.017 and a significance level of  $p = 0.057$ , which is close to the limit of significance. This indicates that this strategy may be less effective than other methods.

The appearance of candidates on social media also did not have a significant effect on the results of the study. Candidates who frequently appear on social media have a coefficient of 0.009 with a significance level of  $p = 0.328$ , indicating that this factor has almost no significant impact. The same applies to the level of interaction on social media, where the coefficient is

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very small (0.0004) with a significance level of  $p = 0.960$ , indicating that the level of online interaction has almost no effect on the results. This finding suggests that although social media is a popular platform, its effectiveness in the context of this study needs to be further evaluated. Overall, the results of this study highlight a number of factors that have a significant effect on candidate success. Factors such as education level, political party affiliation, candidate experience, age, geographic proximity, and blusukan strategy proved to be important variables that significantly influenced the results. On the other hand, the use of billboards, appearance on social media, and online interaction did not have a significant effect. This provides important insights for candidates and campaign teams to design more effective strategies based on these findings. Campaign strategies based on direct approaches and personal relationships with voters tend to be more effective than media or technology-based approaches, at least in the context of this study. This strengthens some of the arguments of previous scholars who do not place religion as a significant factor even though Indonesia has a predominantly Muslim population.

## **E. Discussion and Conclusion**

This study presents important information for the development of voter behavior in Indonesia: Religious identity as a positive but insignificant factor in determining voter behavior. Compared to considering religious identity factors, first-time voters pay more attention to other factors such as education level, distance, leadership experience, and direct

contact. Several reasons that can strengthen the findings of this study are that religion remains a determinant but is not significant. Islamic party identity is still less significant compared to several other identities besides religious identity. This significance shows that first-time voters prioritize variables that they can enter into the classification significance, where there is a clear alignment in distinguishing between candidates such as far and near, smart and stupid, profitable and not. While religion cannot be assessed as a definite measure to determine the level of candidates. So first-time voters can compare between candidates who have differences even though only one variable causes voters to tend to rationalize the concept of what is beneficial or good for voters directly compared to religious factors that may be far from their direct benefits. The findings in this study also show important characteristics of the formal form of religious identity that is lacking in the substance of religion. First-time voters consider that identity alone is not enough to bring them to a better condition. For example, by choosing candidates with higher levels of education, the policies that will be taken will be much better than those produced by those with lower education.

The results provide an illustration that first-time voters who have never voted will say that *"If I have to be in politics, then he must be able to provide benefits for them"*. If not, then no identity can replace it. They want direct benefits, while religion does not seem to provide significant benefits for them directly. The

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results can also be read as a suggestion that if Islamic parties want to be a significant factor for first-time voters, then Islamic parties must be adaptive for a benefit for first-time voters.

However, readers should also note the important limitations of this study. First, this study focuses too much on limited choices. This study is at risk of not being able to produce other alternatives besides the variables that have been provided. Further research is needed to further evaluate the context of variables that are more needed by first-time voters so that the context can be read perfectly.

Second, this study uses a non-probability sampling technique, which means that the results only apply to this particular study and cannot be generalized to all first-time voters. To extend this research in the future, we could use probability sampling techniques (e.g., multistage random sampling) to allow for broader generalizations.

Third, conducting comparative studies would be valuable. For example, we could compare new voters in rural and urban areas to identify different patterns or compare voters from public schools and private religious schools to understand the potential for daily mobilization or political influence in schools. These suggested studies would be valuable in identifying different approaches to understanding and engaging first-time voters. By conducting these studies, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence first-time voters' decision-



making processes across contexts.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study have broad implications for the functioning of democracies around the world today by providing an important alternative to understanding why first-time voters act the way they do.

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