POLITICAL LITERACY AND DEMOCRATIC UNDERSTANDING IN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION: EVIDENCE FROM URBAN MUSLIM STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI RADEN INTAN LAMPUNG

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Abstract
This study aims to examine the influence of political literacy on students' understanding of democracy among students enrolled in the Islamic Political Thought Study Program at a State Islamic University in Lampung in 2024. The study is grounded in the theoretical assumption that political literacy functions as a form of civic competence that shapes students' capacity to understand, evaluate, and internalize democratic values and practices. This research employed a quantitative survey design using a questionnaire as the primary instrument to measure political literacy as the independent variable and understanding of democracy as the dependent variable. The population consisted of active students of the Islamic Political Thought Study Program at Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Raden Intan Lampung, with 20 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression to examine the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the two variables. The results show that political literacy has a positive and statistically significant effect on students' understanding of democracy ($p < 0.05$), indicating that students with higher political literacy tend to demonstrate better understanding of democratic values, participation, and public accountability. The coefficient of determination (R^2) further indicates that political literacy contributes meaningfully to explaining variation in students' democratic understanding, although the remaining variance is influenced by factors outside the model. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening political literacy through curriculum development, student organizational engagement, and civic learning in Islamic higher education. This study contributes empirically to the development of political education research by demonstrating that political literacy

plays a significant role in shaping democratic understanding among students in an Islamic academic context.

Keywords: political literacy; democratic understanding; Islamic higher education; urban Muslim students; political education

A. Introduction

In a modern democratic system, students occupy a strategic position as an intellectual group with significant potential to drive social and political change. Indonesian political history demonstrates that students have often been crucial actors in the process of democratic transformation, from the independence movement to the 1998 reforms and various contemporary social movements (Qodir, 2023). This role is inseparable from students' intellectual capacity, which enables them to think critically, act rationally, and articulate public interests more objectively. Therefore, students are seen not only as academic agents but also as agents of change and social control in a democracy (Budiardjo, 2003).

Higher education as an educational institution has a strategic responsibility in shaping students' political awareness and understanding of democracy (Wartoyo & Ginting, 2025). Campuses serve not only as spaces for the transfer of knowledge, but also as arenas for the formation of character, attitudes, and civic values. Through the educational process, academic discussions, and student organization activities, students are expected to develop a comprehensive understanding of political dynamics and internalize democratic values in their daily lives. In this context, political literacy serves as a main foundations for students to understand the political system, the democratic process, and their roles and responsibilities as citizens (Zamroni, 2011).

Students in the Islamic Political Thought Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung posses distinctive characteristics compared to students in general. In addition to being equipped with modern political knowledge, they also gain an understanding of politics from an Islamic perspective. This places these students in a unique position, as they are required to integrate democratic values with Islamic principles such as justice (*'adl*), deliberation (*shura*), equality (*musawah*), responsibility (*amanah*), and the welfare of the community (Dedi, 2020). This integration is important considering that democracy in Indonesia is developing in a religious and pluralistic society; therefore, an understanding of democracy based on ethical and moral values is very relevant (Effendy, 2003). However, various studies indicate that students' political literacy levels are not yet optimal. Although students have extensive access to political information through mass media, social media, and public discussion forums, not all students are able to process this information critically and rationally. The phenomena of political hoaxes, opinion polarization, and political pragmatism demonstrate that abundant access to information does not always equate to quality political understanding. This situation has the potential to lead to students' understanding of democracy being shallow and procedural, limited to elections and changes in power, without understanding substantial values such as justice, meaningful participation, and public accountability (Fatah;, 1994).

At this point, an important academic debate emerges. On the one hand, political literacy is often assumed to automatically strengthen democratic understanding because students who possess greater political knowledge are expected to think more rationally, participate more actively, and behave more democratically. On the other hand, several critical perspectives argue that political literacy does not necessarily lead to substantive democratic understanding, particularly when political information is

consumed passively, uncritically, or merely as fragmented digital content. In this view, students may be politically informed, yet still possess only a procedural and superficial understanding of democracy. This unresolved debate suggests that the relationship between political literacy and democratic understanding remains theoretically contested and empirically open.

Political literacy in this context is an important key. In general, political literacy can be understood as an individual's ability to understand, analyze, and evaluate political information and participate actively and responsibly in the political process (Karolčík et al., 2025a; Koren, 2025). McDevitt and Kiousis emphasize that political literacy encompasses not only knowledge of political institutions and actors, but also critical thinking skills and the ability to rationally evaluate political information. With good political literacy, individuals are able to sort out valid information, understand the interests behind public policies, and take responsible political stances (McDevitt & Kiousis, 2006).

Another perspective on political literacy is put forward by Stefan Karolcik et.al, who states that political literacy consists of three main aspects: political knowledge, political awareness, and political participation. Political knowledge relates to an individual's understanding of the political system, state institutions, decision-making processes, and prevailing public policies. Political awareness refers to an individual's level of concern and sensitivity to political and social issues developing in their environment. Meanwhile, political participation reflects an individual's active involvement in various forms of political activity, both directly and indirectly. These three aspects are interrelated and shape intelligent, rational, and critical political attitudes among citizens. If one aspect does not develop optimally, an individual's political literacy will be incomplete and tend to be passive or merely formal (Karolčík et al., 2025b).

For students, political literacy plays a highly strategic role because they are at a stage of intellectual and social development that enables them to think critically and contribute to public life. Political literacy serves as an intellectual and moral foundation for students to objectively understand socio-political dynamics, rationally assess public policies, and take responsible positions on various national issues. On campus, political literacy is reflected through student involvement in scientific discussions, student organizations, advocacy activities, and participation in internal campus decision-making. Beyond campus, political literacy encourages students to act as agents of social change, capable of bridging community interests with government policies (Mariana & Husin, 2017).

Understanding democracy can be defined as an individual's ability to grasp the principles, values, and mechanisms that underlie a democratic system of government. Robert A. Dahl explains that democracy demands broad citizen participation, freedom of expression, equal political rights, and government accountability to the people. A comprehensive understanding of democracy extends beyond procedural aspects, such as the implementation of elections and the existence of representative institutions, but also encompasses a substantive understanding of democratic values, such as justice, openness, respect for human rights, and the rule of law. Thus, democracy is understood not merely as a system of government, but as a political culture that lives in everyday social practices (Dahl, 2008).

In the student context, an understanding of democracy is reflected in how they view differences of opinion, resolve conflicts through dialogue, and respect the rights and obligations of fellow campus members. Students with a strong understanding of democracy tend to be more open to diverse views, less easily provoked by emotional

political issues, and able to prioritize the common good over personal or group interests (Taylor et al., 2025; Zhao & Zhang, 2025). Therefore, understanding democracy is an important foundation in shaping the character of students who are tolerant, critical, and responsible as future leaders.

In the context of Islamic higher education, an understanding of democracy cannot be separated from the Islamic values that underpin student character formation. Democracy is not viewed solely as a Western concept, but rather as a system consistent with Islamic teachings. The principle of deliberation (shura) in Islam aligns with democratic decision-making practices, justice ('adl) serves as the primary foundation for ensuring equal rights and obligations, while trustworthiness emphasizes the moral responsibility of those in power to society. The value of ukhuwah (brotherhood) also strengthens the spirit of democracy by emphasizing social solidarity and concern for others (Thielicke-Witt, 2025).

Nurcholish Madjid emphasized that democracy and Islam have strong convergences in moral and ethical aspects, particularly in upholding human dignity, social justice, and responsible freedom. Democracy, from an Islamic perspective, does not conflict with religious teachings as long as it is implemented with moral values and uphold the principle of justice. Therefore, students of the Islamic Political Thought Study Program are expected to understand democracy substantively, grounded in moderate, inclusive Islamic values that are oriented toward the welfare of the people (Majid, 2008).

The link between political literacy and democratic understanding has been highlighted in various previous studies. Research by Eni Hidayati and colleagues in 2022 demonstrated that Civics instruction significantly impacted students' political literacy. The study emphasized the crucial role of formal education in developing students' political knowledge and awareness through the introduction of basic concepts of citizenship, the political system, and the rights and obligations of citizens. However, this research did not specifically examine the extent to which improved political literacy directly impacts students' understanding of democracy (Hidayati et al., 2022).

Furthermore, several other studies have shown that political literacy contributes to students' democratic attitudes and political participation. Students with high levels of political literacy tend to have greater political self-efficacy, thus feeling empowered to understand public issues and participate in the democratic process. This suggests that political literacy serves not only as cognitive knowledge but also as a factor in shaping democratic attitudes and behavior. Therefore, political literacy can be viewed as a crucial prerequisite for building a comprehensive and sustainable understanding of democracy among students (Santika & Tripayana, 2025; Yu & Wang, 2025).

Another study indicated that social media can increase political literacy by up to 54.79%. However, the study focused more on social media as a source of political literacy and did not delve deeply into how this increased political literacy impacts students' understanding of democracy (Pradana, 2017). Furthermore, a research conducted by Sadeli in 2024 found a positive relationship between democratic education and student political participation. However, the study also revealed that students' understanding of democratic mechanisms and procedures was still relatively limited. This indicates that high political participation is not always accompanied by a comprehensive understanding of democracy.

Based on this review, it can be concluded that although there has been a lot of research discussing political literacy, democratic education, and student political participation, there are still research gaps that need to be filled. Most studies have not

specifically examined the influence of political literacy on democratic understanding among students of the Islamic Political Thought Study Program, especially in Islamic higher education environments. Yet, the students in this context have unique scientific characteristics and values, making it important to study them specifically. Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the influence of political literacy as an independent variable on democratic understanding as a dependent variable among the students. This study used a quantitative approach with a survey method to obtain an empirical picture of the relationship between the two variables.

The novelty of this study lies in three main aspects. First, this study places democratic understanding, not merely political participation or media exposure as the primary dependent variable, thereby offering a more substantive analytical focus. Second, this research specifically examines students in an Islamic higher education setting, a context that remains underexplored in studies of political literacy and democracy. Third, this study focuses on students of the Islamic Political Thought Study Program, whose understanding of democracy is shaped not only by civic-political knowledge but also by Islamic ethical and normative values. This makes the study both contextually distinctive and theoretically relevant.

More broadly, this study aims to determine the extent to which political literacy, encompassing knowledge, political thinking skills, and political attitudes, influences students' understanding of the concepts of democracy, the rights and obligations of citizens, political participation, and social control. By understanding this relationship, it is hoped that this research will provide academic contributions to the development of Islamic political studies and democratic education in Islamic universities. In addition to its academic contribution, this research is also expected to provide practical benefits for higher education administrators, particularly in designing curricula and student activities that can improve students' political literacy and understanding of democracy. In the long term, improving students' political literacy is expected to produce a generation of Muslim intellectuals who are critical, democratic, and possess integrity, and who are able to contribute positively to the life of the nation and state.

B. Methods

This research used a quantitative approach with a survey method. With this quantitative approach, the data were collected in numerical form and subsequently analyzed using statistical techniques. The results can then demonstrate patterns of relationships, direction of influence, and levels of significance between the variables studied. The quantitative approach also allows researchers to generalize research findings to a broader population, as long as the sample used meets representative criteria (Sugiyono, 2021).

The population in this study was all active students of the Islamic Political Thought Study Program (PPI) at UIN Raden Intan Lampung in the 2024 academic year with the academic consideration that the students had received learning related to Islamic politics, classical and modern political thought, democracy, and citizenship. The total number of respondents selected as the research sample was 20 students who met the predetermined purposive sampling criteria. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling. The sample criteria included students who had completed at least four semesters, were active in academic activities, and had experience participating in student organizations or public discussion activities. The data collection instrument used in this study was a closed questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, consisting of the answer choices strongly disagree, disagree,

undecided, agree, and strongly agree (Likert, 1932). The questionnaire consisted of two research variables, namely political literacy (X) and students' understanding of democracy (Y). Each variable was measured using 10 statement items, resulting in a total of 20 questionnaire items. Political literacy was measured through the dimensions of political knowledge, critical political awareness, and participatory orientation, while students' understanding of democracy was measured through the dimensions of procedural understanding, substantive democratic values, and democratic participation.

The research instrument was first tested through validity and reliability tests. Validity testing was conducted by correlating the scores of each item with the total score of the variable using the Pearson correlation technique. Reliability testing was used to determine the level of consistency and reliability of the instrument in measuring the research variables. Reliability testing was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha method. An instrument is considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.70 (Ghozali, 2016). Based on the validity test results, all statement items in variables X and Y were declared valid because each item had an r-count value greater than the r-table value (0.444). In variable X, the r-count values ranged from 0.528 to 0.860, while in variable Y, the r-count values ranged from 0.643 to 0.878. The reliability test results showed that variable X obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.843 and variable Y obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.919, indicating that both variables met the reliability criteria and were suitable for further analysis.

The data collected through the questionnaire were then analyzed using simple linear regression analysis. Through this analysis, researchers were able to determine the direction of the relationship between the two variables, whether it was positive or negative, and to determine the extent of the influence of political literacy on students' understanding of democracy. Furthermore, the regression analysis also produced a coefficient of determination (R^2) value, which indicates the extent of the political literacy variable's contribution to explaining variations in students' understanding of democracy. The obtained R^2 value provides an overview of how much of the change in students' understanding of democracy can be explained by students' level of political literacy, while the remainder is influenced by factors outside the research model (Priyatno, 2024). Prior to conducting the regression analysis, classical assumption tests were performed, including normality, linearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, to ensure that the regression model met the required statistical assumptions. The results showed that the data were normally distributed, the relationship between variables was linear, and no heteroscedasticity problem was found, indicating that the regression model was appropriate for use.

The entire data analysis process was conducted in accordance with scientific principles and research ethics. The data obtained were kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

C. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

The results of the study indicate that the political literacy level of students in the Islamic Political Thought Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung falls within the moderate to high category. This finding was obtained based on the results of processing questionnaire data distributed to the students. Descriptive statistical analysis shows that the mean score of students' political literacy was in the moderate-to-high range, indicating that most respondents possessed an adequate level of

political knowledge, critical awareness, and participatory orientation. This result suggests that, in general, students have a sufficient understanding of fundamental political concepts and are able to relate them to broader social and political realities. In general, students have an adequate basic understanding of fundamental political concepts, such as the Indonesian government system, general election mechanisms, the functions of legislative, executive, and judicial institutions, and the rights and obligations of citizens in national and state life (Noer, 1965). This condition shows that the students have quite good intellectual readiness in understanding the dynamics of national politics, although the level of depth of understanding between individuals still shows variation (Almond & Verba, 1989). Variations in the level of political literacy were reflected in differences in students' responses across questionnaire items, indicating that while some students showed strong conceptual and analytical understanding, others remained at a more moderate level of political comprehension.

The differences in the level of understanding are influenced by several factors, including organizational experience background, intensity of participation in political discussions, and individual interest in social and political issues (Surbakti, 2010). Students who actively participate in discussions, seminars, and student organizations tended to score higher on indicators of political literacy than those with lower levels of participation. This finding confirms that political literacy is not formed solely through classroom learning, but is also shaped by social interaction and organizational engagement. Furthermore, students with high political literacy generally demonstrate a strong interest in emerging political and social issues, both at the local and national levels, and are able to respond rationally and argumentatively to various political phenomena (Hidayati et al., 2022).

The descriptive findings also show that students' understanding of democracy was generally in the moderate to high category. Respondents demonstrated relatively strong understanding not only of procedural democracy, such as elections and representative institutions, but also of substantive democratic values, including justice, equality, freedom of expression, and citizen participation. This suggests that students' democratic understanding extends beyond formal institutional knowledge and reflects a broader normative awareness of democracy as a value-based social system.

Inferential statistical analysis further confirms the relationship between political literacy and students' understanding of democracy. The results of the simple linear regression analysis indicate that political literacy has a positive and statistically significant effect on students' understanding of democracy. The significance value was below the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the effect was statistically significant and that the proposed hypothesis was accepted. This means that higher levels of political literacy were associated with stronger levels of democratic understanding among students.

The regression results also show that political literacy contributed meaningfully to explaining variations in students' understanding of democracy. The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates that political literacy accounted for a measurable proportion of the variance in democratic understanding, while the remaining variance was influenced by other factors outside the model. This finding confirms that political literacy serves as an important explanatory factor in shaping democratic understanding, although it does not operate as the sole determinant.

As presented in the validity and reliability tests, the instrument used in this study demonstrated strong empirical quality. All questionnaire items in both variables met the validity threshold, with item-total correlation values exceeding the required r-table value (0.444). Likewise, the reliability test showed Cronbach's Alpha values of

0.843 for political literacy and 0.919 for democratic understanding, indicating that both instruments were statistically reliable and internally consistent. These results strengthen the credibility of the findings and confirm that the observed relationship between political literacy and democratic understanding was supported by a valid and reliable measurement instrument.

Overall, the findings indicate that students of the Islamic Political Thought Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung possess a relatively strong level of political literacy and democratic understanding. More importantly, the findings empirically confirm that political literacy has a significant and positive effect on students' understanding of democracy. This suggests that students with stronger political literacy are more likely to develop broader, deeper, and more substantive democratic understanding in both academic and social contexts

2. Discussion

Students' political literacy is closely related to their involvement in academic activities and student organizations. Most respondents reported actively participating in activities such as public discussions, national seminars, leadership training, and intra- and extra-campus organizations. These activities serve as important learning spaces for students to understand political practice directly, beyond just the theory learned in the classroom. This indicates that political literacy in the university context functions not merely as cognitive knowledge acquisition, but as a process of civic socialization through which students internalize democratic norms in practical settings. Through organizational activities, students are trained to express opinions, accept differing views, resolve conflicts through deliberation, and make decisions collectively (Pertiwi et al., 2021).

The explanation of instrument validity is retained not merely as methodological support, but as analytical support confirming that the observed relationship between political literacy and democratic understanding is based on empirically sound measurement. Based on the results of the instrument validity test as presented in the table, it can be explained that all statement items in both variables X1 and Y2 were declared valid. This was indicated by the calculated r value of each item which was consistently greater than the table r (0.444). In variable X1, the calculated r value ranges from 0.528 to 0.860. The highest value was found in item X1.6 (r = 0.860), while the lowest value was found in item X1.9 (r = 0.528). However, all calculated r values in variable X1 still exceeded the table r, indicating all items adequately measured the intended construct adequately. Meanwhile, in variable Y2, the calculated r-values ranged from 0.643 to 0.878, with the highest value found in item Y2.8 (r = 0.878) and the lowest in item Y2.5 (r = 0.643). All items in variable Y2 also demonstrated strong and significant correlations with the total score and were therefore considered valid. These results strengthen the analytical credibility of the findings by confirming that the statistical relationship identified in the regression model was derived from valid and conceptually consistent indicators rather than weak measurement items.

Involvement in student organizations also contributes to the development of democratic character. The process of electing organizational leaders, developing work programs, and implementing decision-making mechanisms reflect small-scale democratic practices. Thus, students' political literacy is formed not only through formal academic learning but also through direct social experiences on campus. This finding suggests that student organizations function as micro-democratic arenas in which democratic values are not merely taught, but repeatedly practiced and socially

reproduced. This reinforces the view that political education cannot be separated from the social and cultural practices of student organizations (Tilaar, 1999).

The explanation of instrument reliability is retained not merely as technical reporting, but as analytical support for the consistency of the observed relationship. Based on the results of the research instrument reliability test, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.843 was obtained for variable X with 10 items, and 0.919 for variable Y with the same number of items, namely 10 statement items. The Cronbach's Alpha value on variable X which is above the minimum limit of 0.70 indicates that the instrument has a good level of reliability, so that the statement items on variable X are consistent in measuring the construct being studied. Meanwhile, the Cronbach's Alpha value on variable Y which reaches 0.919 indicates very high reliability (excellent reliability), which reflects very strong internal consistency between items. Thus, it can be concluded that the research instrument on variables X and Y have met the reliability criteria, so it is suitable for use as a measuring tool in research. The consistency of respondents' answers to each statement item indicates that the instrument is able to provide stable and reliable measurement results for further analysis. Analytically, this reliability strengthens confidence that the relationship identified between political literacy and democratic understanding reflects a stable empirical pattern rather than random response variation.

Based on the statistical analysis results, a simple linear regression test showed a significant effect between political literacy and students' understanding of democracy. However, the analytical significance of this result lies not only in confirming statistical significance, but in demonstrating that political literacy functions as an explanatory mechanism through which students interpret, evaluate, and apply democratic principles. The significance value obtained was below the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the research hypothesis was accepted. This finding indicates that political literacy plays a role in influencing students' understanding of democracy. The higher the level of political literacy possessed by students, the better their understanding of democratic values and principles (Ghozali, 2016).

The understanding of democracy referred to in this research is not only limited to procedural understanding, such as the implementation of elections or the government system, but also includes substantive understanding regarding the values of justice, equality, freedom of opinion, political participation, and social control over power (Held, 2006). This suggests that political literacy contributes not only to procedural awareness, but also to the normative internalization of democracy as an ethical social order. Students with high political literacy tend to understand democracy as a social mechanism that aims to ensure justice and shared prosperity, not just a formal administrative process.

The results of this study align with McDevitt and Kiousis's (2006) argument, which states that political literacy can increase political efficacy, namely an individual's belief in their ability to understand and engage in the political process. Individuals with high political efficacy will be more confident in expressing opinions, evaluating public policies, and participating in political and social activities. In the context of PPI students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, political efficacy is reflected in students' courage in discussions, criticizing campus and government policies, and their involvement in social activities (McDevitt & Kiousis, 2006). This finding extends their argument by showing that political efficacy in Islamic higher education is not only cognitive confidence, but also a socially practiced democratic agency shaped by organizational participation.

This opinion is also supported by Carpini and Keeter (1996), who asserted that

political literacy is a key factor influencing democratic attitudes and citizens' social responsibility. Students with high levels of political literacy tend to be more concerned with public interests, have legal awareness, and demonstrate a critical attitude toward abuse of power. However, the present study expands this argument by showing that political literacy in Islamic higher education is not only a determinant of civic competence, but also a mechanism for the ethical formation of democratic responsibility. The findings of this study indicate that students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung with high levels of political literacy tend to be more active in activities reflecting democratic participation, both on campus and in the community.

In addition to the influence of general political literacy, the research also shows that students' understanding of democracy is influenced by the integration of Islamic values taught in Islamic campus environments. As students studying Islamic Political Thought, respondents not only study Western political theory but also Islamic political concepts that emphasize moral and ethical values. The concepts of *shura* (deliberation), '*adl* (justice), *amanah* (responsibility), and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) are core values that strengthen students' understanding of democracy (Yudhyarta et al., 2025; Yusoff, 2025). These findings suggest that democratic understanding in Islamic higher education is formed through a dual normative framework: democratic citizenship and Islamic ethical values. These values are reflected in students' attitudes in organizational and social interaction. Students tend to prioritize deliberation when resolving disagreements, respect differing perspectives, and emphasize collective responsibility in decision-making. This indicates that Islamic values do not merely complement democratic understanding, but provide its moral and ethical grounding.

The findings of this study are also consistent with several previous studies. Research by Hidayati et al. (2022) showed that Civics learning significantly increased students' political literacy. However, this study did not specifically link political literacy to democratic understanding. Meanwhile, research by Pradana (2017) found that social media can increase students' political literacy by up to 54.79%, although this increase did not fully translate into a deeper understanding of democracy. Research by Sadeli (2024) also found a positive relationship between democracy education and students' political engagement, although procedural understanding of democracy remained relatively limited. Compared with these studies, the present research contributes a more context-specific explanation by showing that in Islamic higher education, political literacy becomes more substantively democratic when mediated by Islamic ethical values.

The differences and similarities in these research findings indicate that political literacy does play a crucial role in shaping an understanding of democracy, but its effectiveness is highly dependent on the quality of learning and the surrounding value context. For students studying Islamic Political Thought at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, the integration of political literacy and Islamic values is a distinguishing factor that strengthens a more comprehensive understanding of democracy. This constitutes the main analytical contribution of the study, namely that political literacy functions not only as civic competence, but as a socially practiced and morally mediated mechanism of democratic subject formation.

Although the regression results confirm a statistically significant relationship, the explanatory power of the model remains partial, as indicated by the coefficient of determination (R^2), which shows that democratic understanding is also influenced by factors beyond political literacy alone. This suggests that variables such as media exposure, family political socialization, peer networks, and socio-religious background may also contribute to shaping democratic understanding and should be explored in

future research.

In addition, the interpretation of statistical significance should not be limited to p-value acceptance alone. Analytical attention must also be given to model strength, explanatory scope, and contextual limitations. While the regression confirms that political literacy significantly predicts democratic understanding, its effect should be interpreted as meaningful but not exhaustive, since democratic understanding is also shaped by broader institutional, social, and cultural influences.

Based on the overall results and discussion, it can be concluded that political literacy makes a significant contribution to shaping students' understanding of democracy. Students with high political literacy are better able to critically understand the political system, actively participate in organizational activities as a form of democratic practice, and apply democratic values in their daily lives. In the context of an Islamic campus, the Islamic values taught in courses and religious activities also strengthen students' understanding of democracy, thus forming a character that is not only democratic but also grounded in Islamic morals and ethics. Therefore, improving students' political literacy needs to be continuously encouraged as a strategic step in building a democratic, participatory, and integrity-based academic community.

D. Conclusion

Political literacy has a significant influence on the understanding of democracy among the students in the Islamic Political Thought Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung. It shows that the higher the level of political literacy possessed by students, the better their understanding of the values, principles, and practices of democracy in national and state life. Political literacy has been proven to be an important factor in shaping students' perspectives in understanding democracy not only as a system of government, but also as a social value that emphasizes justice, participation, freedom of expression, and public accountability.

Students with high levels of political literacy demonstrate a better understanding of basic democratic concepts, such as the meaning of popular sovereignty, the role of state institutions, election mechanisms, and the rights and obligations of citizens. Furthermore, they have a stronger awareness of the importance of political participation and social control as part of healthy democratic practices. This demonstrates that political literacy is not only related to mastery of factual knowledge about politics, but also encompasses critical thinking skills, rational attitudes, and ethical awareness in responding to public issues.

The results of this study also demonstrate that the academic environment and student organization activities play a significant role in shaping students' political literacy. Student involvement in scientific discussions, seminars, study forums, and intra- and extra-campus organizations provides a practical and contextual learning environment for political learning. Through these experiences, students learn to understand differences of opinion, express aspirations democratically, and make decisions based on deliberation. This process indirectly strengthens students' understanding of democracy, as democratic values are put into practice in campus life.

In the context of Islamic higher education, this study found that students' understanding of democracy cannot be separated from the Islamic values that underpin education at UIN Raden Intan Lampung. Values such as deliberation (*shura*), justice (*'adl*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), and brotherhood (*ukhuwah*) contribute to shaping students' democratic attitudes. Democracy is understood not solely as a Western concept or procedural system, but as a value aligned with Islamic teachings.

The integration of political literacy and Islamic values enriches students' understanding of democracy, making them more oriented toward ethics, morals, and social responsibility. This research finding reinforces the view that political education in Islamic higher education plays a strategic role in developing students' democratic awareness. Good political literacy can shape students into critical, rational individuals who are not easily influenced by misleading political information. Students with high political literacy are also better prepared to actively and responsibly participate in democratic life, both on campus and in the wider community. Thus, increasing political literacy can be seen as an important effort in producing a young generation that is democratic, has integrity, and is based on Islamic moral values.

Overall, this study confirms that political literacy significantly contributes to shaping students' understanding of democracy in the Islamic Political Thought Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung. The positive relationship between political literacy and democratic understanding suggests that strengthening political literacy should be a primary focus in curriculum development and academic activities at universities, particularly Islamic-based universities. With strong political literacy, students not only understand democracy theoretically but also are able to internalize and practice it in their daily lives.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the sample was limited to students from a single study program within one Islamic university, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader student populations. Second, the study employed a relatively small sample and relied on simple linear regression, which means that the explanatory scope of the model remains limited to the direct relationship between political literacy and democratic understanding. Third, this study did not include other potentially relevant variables such as media exposure, family political socialization, digital literacy, or socio-religious background, which may also influence students' democratic understanding.

These limitations suggest important implications for both policy and academic practice. At the institutional level, universities particularly Islamic higher education institutions should strengthen political literacy through integrative civic education, participatory learning models, and democratic student engagement programs. Curriculum development should place greater emphasis on critical political reasoning, democratic ethics, and civic responsibility, while student organizations should be institutionally supported as spaces for democratic training and leadership formation.

For future research, broader and more comparative studies are needed to examine whether similar patterns emerge across different universities, academic disciplines, and socio-cultural contexts. Future studies may also incorporate additional explanatory variables, larger sample sizes, and more advanced analytical models to better capture the complexity of democratic understanding among students. In addition, comparative research between Islamic and non-Islamic universities would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how political literacy and value systems interact in shaping democratic consciousness

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F. Author Contributions Statement

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