



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Women, Politics, and Democratic *Fiqh*: The Existence of Women's Religious Organizations in the 2024 Elections

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## Abstract

This study aims to examine the relationship between women's religious organizations and the 2024 election contest from the perspective of *fiqh* democracy. This is because women's politics in the contemporary context is a necessity to realize justice for women. This study uses qualitative methods to explore the acceleration of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies. The collected data is then presented descriptively and analyzed using content analysis through *fiqh* civilization (civilization jurisprudence). This study finds that (1) Women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies have demonstrated their strong existence in various aspects of women's participation in the 2024 political arena. (2) The position of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies in the 2024 political contest is influenced by various supporting and inhibiting factors. (3) The contribution of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies in facing the 2024 political contest can be seen through the *fiqh* democracy approach, which is the foundation of the women's religious organization movement.

**Keywords:** Political Contestation, Women's Organization, Fiqh of Democracy.

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat hubungan politik organisasi keagamaan perempuan dalam kontestasi pemilu 2024 perspektif *fiqh* demokrasi. Hal ini dikarenakan politik perempuan dalam konteks kontemporer menjadi sebuah keniscayaan untuk mewujudkan eksistensi keadilan bagi perempuan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk menggali akselerasi gerakan organisasi keagamaan perempuan di Kabupaten Tulungagung dan Trenggalek. Data yang telah dikumpulkan kemudian dipaparkan secara deskriptif untuk kemudian dianalisis menggunakan metode *content analysis* melalui *fiqh* peradaban. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa (1) Organisasi keagamaan perempuan di Kabupaten Tulungagung dan Trenggalek telah menunjukkan eksistensinya yang kuat dalam berbagai aspek partisipasi perempuan di ranah politik 2024. (2) Posisi organisasi keagamaan perempuan di Kabupaten Tulungagung dan Trenggalek dalam kontestasi politik 2024 dipengaruhi oleh berbagai faktor pendukung dan penghambat. (3) Kontribusi organisasi keagamaan perempuan di Kabupaten Tulungagung dan Trenggalek dalam menghadapi kontestasi politik 2024 dapat dilihat melalui pendekatan *fiqh* demokrasi yang menjadi landasan gerakan organisasi keagamaan perempuan.

**Kata kunci:** Kontestasi Politik, Organisasi Perempuan, Fiqh Demokrasi.

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## Introduction

In the contemporary context, elections have become an effort by election participants to win the people's votes as a step towards obtaining public office in the legislative and executive branches. In an effort to win people's votes, election participants utilize various institutions and community groups to obtain votes in their entirety. Moreover, organizations or groups with a large following become a breeding ground for election participants to launch strategies and measures to win votes. As a result, political contests are not only contested by election participants but also by community groups and organizations whose mission is to obtain programs and benefits from the election participants they support (Akbar, 2023).

In return, the relationship between election participants and community groups or organizations is mutually beneficial (Matthews, 2020). On the one hand, election participants need the votes of groups with a large number of supporters (Virananda et al., 2021). Meanwhile, for community groups and organizations, the beneficial programs offered by electoral participants after they are elected are one way to realize the vision and mission of the group. Therefore, the competition for the votes of groups or organizations in electoral contests is an inevitability that cannot be avoided (Laksono, 2023).

Women's groups and organizations are among the community groups and organizations that have a strong following and grassroots support (Cooperman, 2021). The strength and solidarity of women's organizations is due to female leadership, which avoids gender discrimination and polarization. Moreover, the character of women's leadership in organizations can represent women's movements based on productivity. This is evidenced by women's organization programs that involve skill and knowledge development. Finally, through this character, women's organizations have become a group with the intensity and strength to jointly build organizations that have a mission of inclusiveness for women's movements (Kulkarni and Mishra, 2021).

In this context, women's voices in the democratic process are one way to represent women in national development (Rahmanto et al., 2021). In addition to women's position as a group with intensity, solidarity, and integrity, women also have a great opportunity to run for office or to support women's representation (Aspinall et al., 2021). This is in accordance with the Election Administration Law and the Political Party Law, which stipulate that women have a 30% quota in the electoral process. In addition, KPU regulations stipulate the obligation to fulfill the 30% quota for women as election participants (Editorial Team 2023).

Tulungagung and Trenggalek districts have witnessed significant growth in women's political participation in recent years. For example, in the 2019 elections, the general election commission noted that women's

participation as legislative candidates reached 35% in Tulungagung Regency (Tulungagung Regency General Election Commission, 2019) and 32% in Trenggalek Regency (Trenggalek Regency General Election Commission, 2019). This data certainly exceeds the 30% quota standard, signifying the realization of women's participation. In addition to politics, women's political movements can be seen through various community organization activities. For example, in Tulungagung Regency, women's religious organizations have initiated women's empowerment programs. Meanwhile, in Trenggalek Regency, a similar movement has been realized through the "*Perempuan Bergerak*" (Women on the Move) and "*Sekolah Perempuan Trenggalek*" (Trenggalek Women's School) programs.

The Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies also provide support by allocating a special budget for women's empowerment programs. For example, the 2021-2026 Tulungagung Regency Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) aims to increase women's representation in various development sectors (Tulungagung Regency General Election Commission, 2019). Data from the Community and Village Empowerment Agency (DPMD) show that in the last five years, women's participation in development planning deliberations has increased to 45% in Tulungagung Regency (Tulungagung Regency Community and Village Empowerment Agency, 2023) and 42% in Trenggalek Regency (Tulungagung Regency Community and Village Empowerment Agency, 2023). Based on these data, it can be concluded that the reality of women's participation in politics opens up space for more inclusive and responsive policy improvements.

In the context of society, women's associations through organizations have strong group intensity (Sadewo 2019). Therefore, the large number of members of women's religious organizations have various ideas and movements, including in the political sphere. In political contests, for example, women's religious organizations such as Muslimat and Fatayat NU are attractive to politicians seeking to win votes from these groups of women. It is not uncommon for Muslimat and Fatayat NU cadres to participate as candidates in political contests. Thus, Muslimat and Fatayat NU are required to take a stance on political dynamics (Amalia, 2024).

According to organizational rules, although Nahdlatul Ulama and its subordinate organizations are neutral in political contests, in this case, Nahdlatul Ulama's women's religious organizations, through Muslimat and Fatayat NU, are required to take a stance when their cadres participate in political contests. This was found in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies, where the Branch Administrations (PC) of Muslimat and Fatayat NU sent many of their cadres to contest in the 2024 elections, either as candidates or as part of the winning team. Therefore, in facing the 2024 political contest, Muslimat and Fatayat NU women's religious organizations need to play a role

in positioning the organization in the political arena. This is also intended to maintain the existence and spirit of the organization amid political turmoil and debates. Through the political dynamics of women's religious organizations, this study examines the role, position, and existence of Muslimat and Fatayat NU in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies in facing the 2024 political contest.

### **Literature Review**

Several studies related to women's politics include Luky Sandra Amalia (2019), who states that women play a strategic role as objects of campaigns aimed at attracting support. Abdul Jalil (2020) found that the principles of democracy are in line with Islamic teachings that are oriented towards the realization of justice, law enforcement, equality, and freedom of expression, indicating that patriarchy is one of the structural weaknesses in women's politics. This study also found obstacles to women's representation in the 2019 election. Kandawasvika-Nhundu (2021) shows that political parties have a responsibility to realize gender equality in politics and women's political empowerment, particularly women's participation and representation in positions of power and decision-making at all levels. Nurokhman and Mulyani (2021) found that, theoretically, democratic ethics in *fiqh siyasah* is a moral teaching that prioritizes the will of the people and respect for one another.

The above studies indicate that there have been many studies on the position of women in democracy. However, these studies have focused more on the representation of women's movements in the realm of democracy. Therefore, the representation of women's movements in democracy needs to be analyzed through an appropriate construct, in this case, studies on women's representation are always framed by the basic values of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Therefore, the actualization of *fiqh* in women's movements is very important to understand the elasticity of *fiqh* in viewing the dynamics of contemporary democracy. In this case, *fiqh* democracy is one aspect of the analysis of women's movements in the 2024 political contest. As a basis for the construction of *fiqh* democracy, this study examines the implementation of *fiqh* democracy in the relationship between women's organizations and democracy. Hopefully, through this study, *fiqh* democracy will become a form of Islamic legal thinking (*fiqh*) that responds to the political dynamics in Indonesia.

### **Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a field research design combined with a literature review to capture the political dynamics of women's religious organizations in the 2024 election. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning, value orientation, and political movement strategies developed by women's religious organizations in a specific socio-religious context. The

research locations were focused on Tulungagung and Trenggalek districts, considering that both represent the social base of active women's religious organizations and have close ties to electoral political practices at the local level.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with administrators and cadres of women's religious organizations, observation of political-religious activities and programs ahead of the 2024 elections, and examination of relevant organizational documents, political statements, and campaign materials. The data obtained were then analyzed descriptively and analytically using content analysis techniques to identify emerging patterns of discourse, normative arguments, and ideological orientations. The analytical frameworks of *fiqh* democracy and *fiqh* civilization were used as the main analytical tools to assess how the political practices and narratives of women's religious organizations reflect the principles of justice, participation, and public interest from the perspective of contemporary Islamic law. This approach allows for systematic and contextual integration of empirical findings and normative reflections.

## **Result**

### **Women's Politics, Women's Organizations, and Fiqh Democracy**

Political developments have led to political reforms in Indonesia, which have, in practice, provided opportunities for women's groups. In this case, women's emancipation as an effort to achieve equality with men gained momentum when women were always positioned as being discriminated against by men (Armiwulan & Noeswantari, 2005). Not excepted in the political aspect, the emergence of movements to demonstrate women's political existence has become a reality in determining the direction of policies in the context of women's and human rights. Therefore, women's political participation in the contemporary context aims to eliminate apathy and discrimination against women's roles in repressive politics (Neundorf & Shorrocks, 2021).

Through an understanding of democratic politics and women's political participation, it becomes very important to connect women's political existence with the Islamic political system. This is because it relates to ethical aspects that underpin the concept of Islamic politics (Heger, 2023). Moreover, traditional Islam has always been associated with the social privatization of women, including in politics. In several studies, discussions of Islamic politics are often associated with the term democracy. Democracy is synonymous with a system of government whose power is based on the people. Democracy is not an absolute and dogmatic doctrine but rather something that is open to debate (Kaiser, 1997).

In the contemporary context, the inevitability of women's politics has become a necessity in Indonesia's political situation and on the world stage.

The presence of women in the political arena is an added value in determining the direction of inclusive politics. Women's politics has garnered a significant response from the public, especially those with a gender perspective (Fellegi & Hrbková, 2023). Increased representation of women in politics is not only a symbol of equality but also brings a different and broader perspective to political decision-making. This can be seen in various policies that are more responsive to social issues such as education, health, and gender equality, which are often advocated by female politicians (Neundorf and Shorrocks, 2021). In addition, women's participation in politics can strengthen democracy by ensuring that the voices and needs of all segments of society, including women, are better represented. The emergence of female leaders in various countries shows that women have the same capacity as men to lead and manage countries (Heger, 2023). In Indonesia, many women have proven their abilities in various strategic positions at both local and national levels. Therefore, the push to continue fighting for women's involvement in politics must remain an important agenda to create a more just and equal society.

In Indonesian society, the implication of its plurality of Indonesian society is the formation of various organizations within society (Suryatni & Widana, 2023), one of which is religious organizations. One clear piece of evidence for the existence of various religious organizations in Indonesia is the emergence of many Islamic organizations, both large and small. These Islamic organizations have various movements and organizational mindsets based on their scientific and religious beliefs. In practice, Islamic organizations are not only limited to religious movements but also have movements in the social aspects of society. This is the basis for building religious propagation based on the relationship between humans and God, as well as between humans and humans. Therefore, the movements of Islamic organizations in society are significant in influencing the attitudes of people in the socio-cultural context of Indonesian society.

The presence of Islamic organizations in Indonesia has become a characteristic of Islam in Indonesia, with various movements carried out by Islamic organizations. Islamic organizations in Indonesia focus on applying Islamic values in society. As a result, Islamic organizations have become a forum for the community to express themselves in accordance with religious standards in social and state life. Through Islamic organizations, Indonesian society has a forum for determining attitudes, how they express religious teachings, and then integrate them with the socio-cultural values of the Indonesian society. Therefore, the dialogue between religious teachings and the socio-cultural values of Indonesian society has become a distinctive feature of the manifestation of Islamic teachings in Indonesia.

In Indonesian society, political contestation is a representation of a democratic system that aims to gain power in the government. This



contestation extends to the dynamics of movements between groups to present various programs (Simonson et al., 2024). The concepts of contestation and political participation originate from the study of democratic state systems. Despite ongoing disagreements about the concept of democracy, many scholars still adopt the view of electoral democracy as a competitive effort to win the votes of the people for the people. The concept of democracy is defined as emphasizing the implementation of general elections.

In the context of women's political contestation, there are many debates on the relationship between Islam and women's politics. On the one hand, it explains that Muslim-majority countries are less supportive of gender equality, and this lack of support leads to gender inequality, which then becomes a barrier to women's political participation. This statement is different from Indonesia, where there is no support for the proposition that Muslims oppose women in political office. In another context, there is no significant difference between Muslim and non-Muslim men in their perceptions of female leaders. There is a slight difference between Muslim and non-Muslim women, both of whom prefer women in political positions over men. This is supported by the fact that Islamic parties in Indonesia are no better or worse than pluralist or secular parties in terms of recruiting and nominating women as party cadres (Aspinall, et al., 2021).

In Islamic studies, democracy is a discourse that is still being hotly debated. Finally, the study of the relationship between Islam and democracy has become one of the topics that colours Islamic studies. Terminologically, Islam and democracy are defined based on the equality of rights and obligations and the realization of justice for society (Mutakin, 2016). In relation to societal practice, democracy is often associated with political contestation (Spicer, 2018). Political contestation is defined as a movement to carry out various strategies to win democratic contestation. In this case, democracy, which is realized through elections, often employs various strategies and efforts to gain massive public support. Political contests often descend into ongoing feuds (Kleider, 2020). Therefore, polite and ethical democracy is the solution taught by Islam as a basic value in political contests. In Islamic teachings, the basic value of ethics as an effort to realize harmony among communities is a manifestation of the democratic model (Alam 2023). Democracy in a political context is not interpreted as conflict and resistance but rather as a realm for competing in goodness in the context of political programs that prioritize the values of benefit in government (Gouda & Hanafy, 2021). This is in line with the basic concept of Islamic law (*fiqh*), which has a mission to realize the common good for all humanity (Elviandari et al., 2018).

In Islamic teachings, democracy is understood as a representation of its existential value. Democratic ethics is a part of political ethics that positions

democracy as a measure of ethics. Theoretically, ethics in democracy is one of the moral teachings of a society that upholds respect for equal rights in expressing opinions and choices. Democratic ethics are also understood as a political expression to voice opinions while respecting the rights and freedoms of other groups, or what is referred to as non-discrimination. Therefore, democratic ethics uphold agreements formed from the majority vote through a process and mechanism of openness, without coercion (Mujani, 2007).

Understanding democratic ethics is essentially a manifestation of the representation of Islamic teachings on law, in this case, *fiqh*. In Muslim societies, Fiqh is the foundation of life. In practice, *fiqh* plays a role in controlling the lives of Muslims, including in politics. Therefore, the formulation of democratic *fiqh* is urgently needed as a guideline for political contests among Muslims (Salim, 2007). As a basis for *fiqh ijtihad* on democracy, the relationship between religion and the state cannot be separated. This is because the government of a country influences the existence of Islam. This theory is based on religious principles sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith, which explicitly regulate government and politics. In addition to the aspect of the relationship between the state and religion, *fiqh ijtihad* on democracy also emphasizes the political dimension based on Islamic ethics. Through ethical principles, *fiqh* on democracy manifests itself in the formation of an ideal society with a consultative structure through a tendency towards general benefit.

The dimension of public interest as the basis of democratic jurisprudence prioritizes a system of government through the implementation of democracy to achieve the common good. This means that jurisprudence, through the methodology of public interest, has the flexibility of *ijtihad* to respond to challenges and issues related to the democratic state. The *maslahah* method in the context of democracy aims to position politics as a means of solving problems related to humanity. Therefore, *fiqh* democracy is a model of Islamic legal support or *fiqh* that fosters an ethical and equality-oriented system of government.

As a pattern of *ijtihad*, democratic *fiqh* has methods and approaches based on *maslahah*. Public interest in the context of democracy focuses on policies, execution, and implementation based on deliberation and agreement to determine the direction of public interest. Through deliberation, the will of the people in the context of democracy reflects the realization of the public interest. Public interest is interpreted as a form of mutual agreement related to the common good. Through this understanding, democratic *fiqh* is a flexible form of Islamic law in the context of a democratic state.

Democratic *fiqh ijtihad* is based on the *maslahah* approach. *Maslahah* in democracy is defined as the full realization of people's sovereignty. In the context of implementation, democratic *fiqh* emphasizes a reciprocal



relationship between the state and the people. In practical terms, the differences in democracy emphasize the principle of responsibility. The principle of responsibility for the results of democracy is crucial for running the government. This is in line with the basic principles of *fiqh* democracy, which emphasizes unity and solidarity in policymaking to seek the common good.

Through the *maqashid syari'ah* approach, democracy is a means of realizing the integrity of the state (*hifdz al-daulah*). In this context, Al-Juwaini explains the objectivity of the *imamah* institution, which regulates various regulations that form a system of mutual agreement (al-Juwaini, 2009). This is in line with the opinion of Izzuddin bin Abd Salam, who explains that power (*al-wilayah*) and judgment (*al-qadha*) are means to achieve the general good (Abd Salam, 2004). Through this understanding, the relationship between *maqashid syari'ah* and state institutions is defined as the implementation of government based on the spirit of sharia. This is in accordance with *al-ushul al-kulliyah*, which aims to achieve social objectivity, as stated in the Qur'an and Hadith.

## Discussion

### The Existence of Women's Religious Organizations in the 2024 Political Dynamics

As we all know, women play an important role in society in terms of gaining recognition as a group and as an organization. This is because women's groups have a strong community base for building networks. This fact is one of the added values of the formation of women's groups that can influence social dynamics. Moreover, women's communities have been active in social and religious aspects, so that this role can exert influence and attract many people to join women's communities to take strategic steps in social development.

One of the religious organizations with a large membership is the women's religious organization under the Nahdlatul Ulama Autonomous Body (Banom), namely, Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU. These two women's religious organizations have management structures consisting of a Central Leadership (PP) at the national level, Regional Leadership (PW) at the provincial level, Branch Leadership (PC) at the regency/city level, Sub-Branch Leadership (PAC) at the sub-district level, and Branch Leadership (PR) at the village or urban ward level. This fact certainly shows a strong membership base on a national scale, which plays a role in resolving socio-religious issues.

One of Fatayat and Muslimat's efforts to grow their role in society is the participation of the Fatayat and Muslimat organizations in politics. This participation is not intended solely to gain power but rather to enable Fatayat and Muslimat to play a role in the process of fair democracy in Indonesia's pluralistic society. Fatayat and Muslimat's presence in the political arena is to oversee the democratic process and government policies that defend

women's groups. The participation of Fatayat and Muslimat is expected to reflect a fair and ethical democratic process in Indonesia's elections.

One of the bases of Fatayat and Muslimat that has a strong membership representation and a strong NU presence is Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies. These two regencies have Fatayat and Muslimat branch leaders up to the level of Fatayat and Muslimat branch leaders throughout their territories. With a complete management structure, it can be concluded that these two regencies have a very strong basis for women's religious organization. The strength of these women's organizations is certainly an added value for the community and the government to work together to build human civilization.

In practice, the Fatayat and Muslimat Branch Administrations of Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies educate their members and the community about the importance of women's political participation. Through various work programs, such as seminars, discussions, and workshops, they discuss political issues and policy strategies that favor women's groups. In terms of action, the Fatayat and Muslimat Branch Administrations of Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies have a work program to oversee the democratic process in 2024, focusing on political consolidation that represents Islamic political ethics.

The women's movement in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies is oriented towards increasing political understanding through inclusive political education. This step is taken by increasing objective information about the election process itself. At the grassroots level, the Fatayat and Muslimat Branch Administrations of Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies work to overcome the obstacles that women often face in political participation. For example, Fatayat and Muslimat branch administrators in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies provide leadership and communication skills training to empower women. It is hoped that these programs will prevent gender stereotypes that often hinder women in social and political aspects of life.

Furthermore, evidence of the existence of women's organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies shows that they are oriented towards increasing political understanding among women. This existence takes the form of movements that focus on empowering women through political education. Through these movements, women's organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies play active roles in local and national politics. In addition, an important aspect of the realization of women's political movements in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies is the existence of political training and education measures designed to realize women's political inclusiveness (Research Results, 2024).

Training and education programs aim to provide an understanding of the political process. In this context, women's organizations in Tulungagung

and Trenggalek districts are expanding access to improve their understanding of inclusive politics. Through this movement, a political discussion community for women's groups was established. In this community, women share their experiences of involvement in politics, which then becomes a space for women to voice their aspirations and contribute ideas for inclusive policies. The tangible evidence of this forum encouraged women to run for legislative office at the district level. Consequently, several women from the Tulungagung and Trenggalek districts have successfully held important positions in the local government. This shows that inclusive political education can encourage women to become more actively involved in the political process, not only as voters but also as inclusive policy makers.

The existence of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek districts has contributed to changing public perceptions of women's political roles. Previously, politics was often considered a domain dominated by men, but the public now recognizes the important role of women in political decision-making and policy. This existence is manifested in the active movement of women in forming policy advocacy that favours women's and children's rights. Women's groups participate in voicing issues such as domestic violence, reproductive health services, and equality in the workplace. It is hoped that this advocacy will empower women's organizations to fight for women's rights in their local communities.

Through these efforts, women's organizations not only focus on increasing political understanding but also instil awareness of the importance of solidarity and togetherness in overseeing inclusive policies (Fotaki & Pullen, 2023). This is important for realizing women's leadership in facing political and social challenges. Thus, this movement creates not only strong female leaders but also a solid and empowered community of women. Ultimately, the extension of the women's organization movement in Tulungagung and Trenggalek districts is evidence of inclusive political education that brings about significant change in increasing women's participation in the political sphere. Through structured education and advocacy, this movement has succeeded in creating space for women to contribute directly to political processes and regional development.

Through the existence of Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies in the political movement, feminist theory sees the existence of strategies and empowerment of women through liberal feminism and radical feminism approaches (Moghadam, 2005). Liberal feminism emphasizes the importance of women's access to education, politics, and economics. Through efforts to open up space for political participation and increase women's leadership capacity, women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek reflect the idea that women have the same rights to participate in political decisions and policies.

From a radical feminist perspective (Oswald, 2023), the political activities of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies are an effort to challenge the patriarchal structures that have long existed in society. Radical feminism provides the basis for social transformation intended to eliminate male domination and patriarchy. In this context, the strengthening of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies aims to strengthen political participation and dismantle norms that restrict women's roles in the social order (Moghissi, 2005).

In addition, according to empowerment theory (Neundorf & Shorrocks, 2021), the political movement of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies is realized through the improvement of skills and knowledge in political aspects. These empowerment efforts aim to create space for women to participate in the political process and build collective strength within the structure of women's politics. Overall, the political movements of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies demonstrate a broader social transformation for women's empowerment in the political sector.

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Furthermore, evidence of the existence of women's organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies shows that they are oriented towards increasing political understanding among women. This existence takes the form of movements that focus on empowering women through political education. Through these movements, women's organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies play active roles in local and national politics. In addition, an important aspect of the realization of women's political movements in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies is the existence of political training and education measures designed to realize women's political inclusiveness (Research Results, 2024).

Training and education programs aim to provide an understanding of the political process. In this context, women's organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek districts are expanding access to improve their understanding of inclusive politics. Through this movement, a political discussion community for women's groups was established. In this community, women share their experiences of involvement in politics, which then becomes a space for women to voice their aspirations and contribute ideas for inclusive policies. The tangible evidence of this forum encouraged women to run for legislative office at the district level. Consequently, several women from the Tulungagung and Trenggalek districts have successfully held important positions in the local government. This shows that inclusive political education can encourage women to become more actively involved in the political process, not only as voters but also as inclusive policy makers.

The existence of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek districts has contributed to changing public perceptions of women's political roles. Previously, politics was often considered a domain dominated by men, but the public now recognizes the important role of women in political decision-making and policy. This existence is manifested in the active movement of women in forming policy advocacy that favours women's and children's rights. Women's groups participate in voicing issues such as domestic violence, reproductive health services, and equality in the workplace. It is hoped that this advocacy will empower women's organizations to fight for women's rights in their local communities.

Through these efforts, women's organizations not only focus on increasing political understanding but also instil awareness of the importance of solidarity and togetherness in overseeing inclusive policies (Fotaki & Pullen, 2023). This is important for realizing women's leadership in facing political and social challenges. Thus, this movement creates not only strong female leaders but also a solid and empowered community of women. Ultimately, the extension of the women's organization movement in Tulungagung and Trenggalek districts is evidence of inclusive political education that brings about significant change in increasing women's participation in the political sphere. Through structured education and advocacy, this movement has succeeded in creating space for women to contribute directly to political processes and regional development.

Through the existence of Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies in the political movement, feminist theory sees the existence of strategies and empowerment of women through liberal feminism and radical feminism approaches (Moghadam, 2005). Liberal feminism emphasizes the importance of women's access to education, politics, and economics. Through efforts to open up space for political participation and increase women's leadership capacity, women's religious organizations in



Tulungagung and Trenggalek reflect the idea that women have the same rights to participate in political decisions and policies.

From a radical feminist perspective (Oswald, 2023), the political activities of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies are an effort to challenge the patriarchal structures that have long existed in society. Radical feminism provides the basis for social transformation intended to eliminate male domination and patriarchy. In this context, the strengthening of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies aims to strengthen political participation and dismantle norms that restrict women's roles in the social order (Moghissi, 2005).

In addition, according to empowerment theory (Neundorf & Shorrocks, 2021), the political movement of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies is realized through the improvement of skills and knowledge in political aspects. These empowerment efforts aim to create space for women to participate in the political process and build collective strength within the structure of women's politics. Overall, the political movements of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies demonstrate a broader social transformation for women's empowerment in the political sector.

### **Supporting and Hindering Factors for the Position of Women's Religious Organizations in the 2024 Political Contest**

The Fatayat and Muslimat branch administrators of Tulungagung and Trenggalek regencies have a strategic position in the 2024 political contesting. The Fatayat and Muslimat branch administrators of Tulungagung and Trenggalek regencies have the position and role of providing political education to the community and also have the role of supervisors to ensure that the democratic process runs according to the principles of justice. Through various activities and forums, the Fatayat and Muslimat branch administrators of Tulungagung and Trenggalek regencies play an important role in creating an inclusive and fair political environment in Tulungagung and Trenggalek regencies.

In practice, the PC Fatayat and Muslimat of Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies have become partners of the local government in jointly formulating policies. This position makes PC Fatayat and Muslimat of Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies are government partners. Through this position, PC Fatayat and Muslimat of Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies, in the context of democracy, have become a form of actively participated in policy-making. This collaboration allows local governments to gain a broader and more diverse perspective, so that the resulting policies can be more effective and targeted. The active participation of PC Fatayat and Muslimat also reflects efforts to improve the quality of democracy at the

local level, where the voices and aspirations of the community can be conveyed and accommodated in the public policy.

This position embodies the role and legitimacy of women's religious organizations in the democratic sphere of Indonesia. This active role demonstrates the recognition of women's existence by the government and society at large. In practice, the position of PC Fatayat and Muslimat in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies has provided space for women's political existence. This signifies a paradigm shift in the role of women in society, where they are now seen as important actors in the development process of society. This recognition is not only symbolic but also substantial, as their real contributions to formulating policies have a positive impact that is directly felt by the community. Through this active involvement, PC Fatayat and Muslimat not only fight for women's interests but also contribute to general welfare.

The involvement of PC Fatayat and Muslimat in the public policy process also strengthens the position of women in the social and political structures. This provides a concrete example of how religious women's organizations can be effective agents of change. In addition, their participation inspires other women to become involved in political and social activities, building a broader network of solidarity and strengthening women's voices in various decision-making forums. Thus, the presence of PC Fatayat and Muslimat is proof that women have the same abilities and rights to actively participate in the development of the nation and the state.

In general, PC Fatayat and Muslimat Tulungagung prioritize neutrality in their organizations and politics. This step is taken to maintain the credibility and integrity of the organization as a forum for the development and empowerment of women in the context of political education in Indonesia. This step also serves to maintain the dignity of women's religious organizations in practical political contests. However, the neutrality of PC Fatayat and Muslimat NU Tulungagung and Trenggalek does not mean distancing themselves from political participation, but rather proving their activeness and voicing women's issues through policies that are in line with the values of gender equality and justice in Islam.

In the 2024 election contest, PC Fatayat and Muslimat NU Tulungagung and Trenggalek played an active role in encouraging fair and responsible political participation without bias towards any particular group. This step also serves as a measure to safeguard the intensity of political democracy to voice policy measures that prioritize the protection of children and the empowerment of women. The role and position of PC Fatayat and Muslimat NU in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies is to create and build awareness of the importance of electing leaders who are strongly

committed to social issues in the context of child protection and women's empowerment.

PC Fatayat and Muslimat NU Tulungagung and Trenggalek have strategic steps to continue advocating for women to not only be objects in politics, but also subjects who have a voice and influence in the decision-making process. This is a manifestation of the commitment of PC Fatayat and Muslimat NU Tulungagung and Trenggalek to realize a more inclusive and responsive democracy to the needs of women and children. The political roles and positions within PC Fatayat and Muslimat NU Tulungagung and Trenggalek represent aesthetic values in the context of democracy in Indonesia. In this context, women's religious organizations add value to the government's efforts to accommodate the aspirations and inspiration of women's religious organizations.

The position of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies in the 2024 political contest is influenced by several important aspects, including local political dynamics as a historical and religious background in the Tulungagung and Trenggalek regencies. These two regions have a strong religious tradition in the context of traditional Islam. PC Fatayat and Muslimat NU Tulungagung and Trenggalek have a large mass base, which has become a significant force in local politics in the 2024 political contest and democracy. In addition, the existence of PC Fatayat and Muslimat NU in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies not only plays a role in the religious context, but also participates in representing democracy that voices women's voices. In practice, the position of PC Fatayat and Muslimat NU in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies voices women's voices to realize policy measures that prioritize women's empowerment and child protection.

Looking at the supporting and inhibiting factors for the acceleration of PC Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU Tulungagung and Trenggalek in the political movement, we can see this through the theory of participatory democracy (Fishkin 2010). From the perspective of participatory democracy (Wahyudin et al., 2019), PC Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU Tulungagung and Trenggalek play a significant role in providing an open space for women to convey their aspirations and ideas for inclusive policies. Through empowerment programs, PC Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU Tulungagung and Trenggalek play a role as partners of the government in formulating policies that defend women and children.

However, several obstacles to accelerating the women's political movement are the proliferation of structural patriarchy that is still strong in society. In this case, male dominance in political leadership and policy-making often hinders women's access to full participation. In addition, internal fragmentation among women's groups has led to differences in political views

and priorities, reducing the effectiveness of women's religious organizations in facing political challenges. Therefore, despite these challenges, PC Fatayat NU and Muslimat NU Tulungagung and Trenggalek have great potential to become significant actors in the 2024 political contest by utilizing social networks and strengthening cross-sector collaboration in increasing women's political capacity at the regional level.

### **The Contribution of Women's Religious Organizations in Political Contestation through the Study of Fiqh Democracy**

From a *fiqh* perspective on democracy, democracy through the mechanism of elections is one of many ways (*uslub*) to elect representatives of the people (legislative elections) or rulers (executive elections). Legislative elections are intended to elect representatives who have the authority to draft legislation in accordance with the universal message of Sharia, while executive elections are intended to elect leaders who will implement development programs in various fields for the benefit of society (Birch, 2023). In presidential elections, voters should ideally elect those who meet the qualifications to be leaders (Morgenbesser & Pepinsky, 2018). General elections can be one way of implementing democracy in accordance with Sharia values (Sodikin 2015). In this view, Rasyid Ridha, Abu A'la Al-Maududi, and Yusuf Al-Qaradhwai argue that elections may be held as has been practiced in many Muslim countries. Furthermore, Ibn Taimiyah said, "No human being can achieve perfect welfare, both in this world and in the hereafter, unless he is part of a community (*ijtima'i*), realizing cooperation and mutual assistance." Cooperation and mutual assistance are aimed at obtaining benefits and avoiding anything that harms them (Ibn Taimiyah, 1997).

The general election system has been practiced in Islamic history, namely during the era of al-Khulafa ar-Rasyidin, although there was no standard pattern for appointing caliphs at that time. Abu Bakar was appointed through an election in an open deliberation. Umar was appointed by his predecessor based on closed deliberations with several senior companions. Uthman became caliph through an election in an open deliberation by a "formative council." Ali bin Abi Talib was appointed caliph through an election and open meeting, but in the chaotic situation after Uthman's assassination, only a few senior companions remained in Medina (Pulungan, 2002).

The Head of State in Sharia politics has the authority to determine how Sharia should play its role in the state. However, his decisions must reflect the state's authority over the public and aim for the good of society (*mashlahah*). *Maqashid syari'ah*, on the other hand, promotes and projects the realization of benefits (*mashlahah*) and the prevention of harm (*mafsadah*) in every decision and policy-making so that it is in accordance with the basic principles of sharia (Rahman, 2015). Referring to the verses of the Qur'an in Surah Ali

Imran (3):195, Surah al-Nahl (16):97, and Surah al-Taubah (10):71, (Ali, 2008) it can be understood that Allah has given potential to each of His servants without physical limitations in the form of gender, ethnicity, race, etc. The substance of the above verses legitimizes women's participation in all aspects of life, including politics. Women have the right to appear as intelligent as men in all dimensions and spheres of life, both domestic and public, to prosper the earth. Through observation of valid transcendental authoritative sources, no text explicitly states that only men have the right to control the political sphere. For example, in Islamic history, there is the figure of Queen Balqis, whose intelligence in government is immortalized in the Qur'an in Surah al-Naml (27):23.

Throughout history, there has been a reduction and simplification of women's involvement in politics based on tendentious and discriminatory assumptions steeped in patriarchal domination, namely that women are irrational, emotional creatures of God who lack competence and credibility in the public and political spheres. It is difficult to find conventional classical lectures that legitimize and validate women's involvement in spheres and spaces that intersect with politics, both in the legislative and judicial aspects.

Appreciation for the intellectual and political intelligence of women was spearheaded by Ibn Rushd (d. 1198 AD) in his monumental work *Talkhish al-Siyasah li Aflathon* (Rusydi, 2000). Ibn Rushd based his thinking on the assumption that political issues are human issues that are closely related to issues of desire (*iradiyah*). Therefore, the only way to study political issues is through an approach to human character (*tabi'iyah al-insaniyah*). He also considered that state issues have many similarities with human soul issues. Therefore, in his political discussions, he placed "human perfection" (*al-kamalat al-insāniyah*) as the main foundation (Rusydi, 1999). Furthermore, Ibn Rushd raised the theme of democracy and people's sovereignty. According to him, in a democracy, there is no sovereignty other than that which lies in the hands of the people. This is in line with the basic law of *fitriyah*, which respects human freedom (*la siyadata illa biiradah al-musawwidin wa tab'an li al-qawanin al-ula al-fitriyah*). Through this understanding, it is clear how he respects the rights of humans as beings created from birth (*fitriyah*, natural) and does not view humans from the perspective of religion, gender, or group.

The acceptability of women's political participation is not based solely on political interests but rather because religion legalizes the political space for women. Providing massive and escalating space for women in structural politics eliminates discriminatory culture in both domestic and public spaces. This is intertwined with the re-actualization of the doctrines of the Oneness of God (*tauhid*), freedom (*al-hurriyyah*), equality (*musawwah*), respect for humanity (*karamah al-insaniyyah*), and justice (*'adalah*) (Muhammad, 2004).

Furthermore, Ibn Rushd introduced the equality of rights between men and women, even stating that women can be appointed as leaders in a country, just like men. This discourse reflects the Islamic principle of granting women the same rights as men, except in certain matters specific to women or men due to religious arguments. Islam allows women to preach, seek knowledge, and take on roles in various fields, such as economics, agriculture, and politics (Umar, 1998).

This analysis shows that the role and existence of PC Fatayat and Muslimat in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies in the 2024 political contestation are in accordance with sharia principles. The aim is to re-legitimize the position and role of women in social and political spheres. With Sharia principles as their foundation, PC Fatayat and Muslimat respond to the challenges of modernity without abandoning the Islamic values they hold dear. This shows that the integration of religious values and women's sociopolitical roles is not only possible but can also strengthen a more inclusive and equitable social and political structure.

In the context of the 2024 political contest, the roles of PC Fatayat and Muslimat are becoming increasingly important. They serve as monitors and supervisors of the democratic process and as catalysts for sustainable change. With their involvement, issues related to women's rights, education, health, and social welfare can be raised and fought for more effectively. Their participation also brings a different and often overlooked perspective to mainstream politics, enriching political discourse and helping create more comprehensive and inclusive policies.

More than just participants in democracy, PC Fatayat and Muslimat have the potential to become key drivers of political campaigns focused on social justice and women's empowerment. They can use their extensive networks and strong mass bases to mobilize support, educate voters, and advocate for pro-women policies. With well-planned strategies and consistent implementation, they can become a significant force in determining the direction of local and national politics while setting an example for other women's organizations throughout Indonesia.

## **Conclusion**

Women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies have strongly encouraged women's active participation in the 2024 elections. Through political education and leadership training, these women's organizations have succeeded in raising political awareness and strengthening women's confidence in taking on roles in the public sphere. Furthermore, women are not only equipped to be informed voters but also to become leaders who can voice women's and children's issues in public policy, thereby supporting the realization of gender equality in local politics.



The strategic position of women's religious organizations is further strengthened by their good relations with political parties and the government, which have opened up more space for the formulation of women's empowerment policies in Indonesia. This regulatory support provides opportunities for women's religious organizations to become more involved in decision-making processes. However, challenges such as gender stereotypes and the lack of women's representation in strategic positions remain obstacles. Nevertheless, the growing strength of political networks and institutional support provides great hope for the sustainability of their role in fighting for women's issues in a more inclusive manner.

The contribution of women's religious organizations in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies is based on a *fiqh* democracy approach, which combines the principles of equality in Islam with modern democratic values. This approach legitimizes women's involvement in politics as part of religious practice, supporting women's active role in the public sphere. Through *fiqh* democracy, women's religious organizations not only strengthen women's capacity in local democracy but also make Islam the normative foundation for the women's political emancipation movement in the contemporary era.

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### **Author Contribution Statement**

This research is the result of collaboration between the first author (KA) and the second author (AM). The first author contributed to the formulation of the concept and theoretical framework of *fiqh* democracy, the preparation of instruments, and the research design. Data collection was carried out jointly by the first and second authors through observation, interviews, and documentation studies in Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies. Data analysis and discussion of the research results were also carried out collaboratively by both authors. Subsequently, the first author drafted the main text of the article in journal form, while the second author adjusted the writing style in accordance with the journal template and supplemented and strengthened the relevant references.

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