



POLITICAL IDENTITY DILEMMA: ELECTORAL AFFILIATION OF NU TRENGGALEK CITIZENS WITH PKS IN SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

This study examines the phenomenon of electoral affiliation of some Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) members in Trenggalek towards the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), which represents a new dynamic in the local political configuration and creates a political identity dilemma. Historically, NU members are known to have political and ideological closeness to the National Awakening Party (PKB). However, in recent years, there have been signs of a change in electoral preferences towards PKS, a party with a more modernist Islamic orientation. This study aims to understand the factors that drive this affiliation and analyze its impact on the collective identity of NU members and the local political map in Trenggalek. The method used is a literature study (library research) with a qualitative approach, where data is collected through literature studies of books, scientific journals, research reports, and other scientific sources relevant to the theme of Islamic politics, religion-based voter behavior, and religious identity. The results of the study indicate that this electoral shift is influenced by PKS's adaptive strategy in the approach to preaching and political communication that accommodates NU traditions, disappointment with PKB's performance at the local level, and the openness of the young generation of NU to alternative political choices. However, this convergence has created identity tensions, especially among NU figures who view PKS as a threat to traditional values. The implications of this study indicate the importance of an inclusive approach in Islamic politics and the need for a reorientation of Islamic parties in responding to the dynamics of local community religious identities and aspirations in a contextual and sensitive manner

Keywords: *Political Identity; Electoral Behavior; Nahdlatul Ulama (NU); (PKS); Sociological*

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of electoral affiliation of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) residents in Trenggalek towards the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) has become a political event that cannot be underestimated in reading the dynamics of local politics in Indonesia (Azra 2021). In the context of sociology and Islamic politics, this tendency not only reflects a shift in the political behavior of society based on religion, but also indicates changes in social structure, relations between Islamic groups, and the dynamics of electoral politics at the local level. Historically, NU is an Islamic mass organization that tends to have ideological and cultural closeness to the National Awakening Party (PKB), a political party that was born from the womb of NU itself after the reformation. This closeness is not solely

based on ideology, but also on social, cultural, and patronage networks of ulama and Islamic traditions ala Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah An-Nahdliyyah. Meanwhile, PKS was born from the tarbiyah movement and modernist-urban Islam which initially had different characteristics, even tending to be at odds with the religious traditions of NU residents.

However, in the last two decades, the political configuration of Muslims in Indonesia has begun to shift (Liddle and Mujani 2019). Pragmatic and adaptive approaches have begun to replace the previously rigid ideological barriers. In the midst of this condition, PKS has demonstrated its ability to read opportunities, including in areas that have long been known as strong NU bases such as Trenggalek. There is a tendency for changes in the electoral behavior of NU members who are starting to open up to PKS. This phenomenon can be seen from the increasing number of votes for PKS in various legislative and regional head elections in Trenggalek, as well as the participation of NU members in social and religious activities organized by PKS.

Literature review shows that this change did not happen suddenly or without reason. There are a number of causal factors that explain this convergence. First, PKS's adaptive and inclusive da'wah strategy is one of the keys to their success in penetrating the cultural base of NU. PKS is no longer exclusive towards local Islamic traditions, such as tahlilan, yasinan, and maulidan, which were previously not very well received among PKS cadres with a Salafi or modernist background (Hasan 2018). In its new approach, PKS tries to present a friendly and accommodating face of Islam towards local wisdom and the religious culture of local residents. Several PKS cadres are even actively involved in NU religious forums, adopting NU-specific terms, and establishing good relations with local clerics. This strategy has succeeded in creating psychological and cultural closeness that blurs the ideological barriers that previously limited them.

Second, the political communication approach used by PKS also supports this convergence process. PKS appears with a political narrative that emphasizes universal Islamic values, such as honesty, justice, and public service (Hidayat 2019). This is quite resonant with the aspirations of NU members who want real change in their social and economic lives. In various campaigns, PKS carries the agenda of welfare, economic empowerment of the people, and public service based on Islamic values, which are felt to be more concrete and down to earth. In the context of Trenggalek which is an agrarian and religious area, issues like this are very relevant and attract public attention.

Third, the disappointment of some NU members towards PKB's performance in the regions is another important factor. As a party that has long claimed to be the political representation of NU, PKB is often faced with high expectations from its constituents. However, when these expectations are not met, especially in terms of public services, governance, and attention to the aspirations of NU members at the grassroots, then opportunities are open for other parties to enter. In some cases, PKB cadres at the regional level are considered less responsive and trapped in transactional politics, thus reducing the level of public trust. In this context, PKS offers a political alternative that is considered cleaner, more professional, and more organized (Nurrohman 2020).

The impact of this convergence on the local political map in Trenggalek is very significant (Rokhmad 2021). PKS, which was previously only a marginal player, is now starting to show an increase in electoral support. In the last legislative election, PKS's vote acquisition in several sub-districts in Trenggalek increased significantly, even outperforming other Islamic parties. This

phenomenon is also reflected in the involvement of PKS cadres in the regional government structure, both as members of the DPRD and in other strategic positions. Meanwhile, PKB's dominance is starting to erode, especially among young NU voters who are more critical and open to change. They no longer vote based solely on ideological loyalty, but based on the party's track record, programs, and approach to relevant social issues.

This convergence not only changes the structure of electoral support, but also creates new dynamics in the configuration of local political coalitions. The coalitions and alliances that are formed become more fluid and dynamic (Sunarso 2022). PKS, which previously tended to be outside the local power circle, is now an important actor in the process of forming regional governments. In some cases, PKS has even been able to establish political cooperation with nationalist parties or other religious-based parties, including PKB, in order to rally support for regional head elections. This phenomenon marks the transformation of the local political landscape which is increasingly plural and competitive.

However, this convergence is also not free from challenges and obstacles. Differences in ideology and religious approaches between NU and PKS are still a source of tension at the grassroots level. Several NU figures have criticized PKS for trying to take advantage of NU symbols and figures without fully respecting NU traditions and values. For example, in several campaigns, the use of typical NU symbols by PKS cadres was seen as manipulative and inauthentic (Wildan 2021). In addition, some NU members who still adhere to the traditional ideological line view PKS as a representation of conservative and formalistic Islam that is not fully in accordance with the character of Nusantara Islam.

This resistance shows that the convergence of Islamic politics does not always run smoothly (Saifuddin 2023). The process is full of negotiations, compromises, and even internal conflicts. PKS's success in maintaining electoral support from NU members depends heavily on their ability to continue to be inclusive, accommodating, and sensitive to local values. This includes respect for the kiai as a central figure in NU society, a willingness to engage in local religious traditions, and the ability to build dialogical and participatory communication.

Overall, the convergence of Islamic politics between NU members in Trenggalek and PKS reflects a complex and multifaceted socio-political process. This change in electoral behavior not only indicates a shift in political preferences, but also changes in power relations, Islamic political discourse, and the social structure of society. Within the framework of political sociology, this phenomenon can be seen as a form of adaptation and transformation of political actors in facing the ever-changing social reality (Muttaqin 2022). Not only that, this convergence also shows that in local Indonesian democracy, political loyalty is relative and highly influenced by social, economic, and cultural dynamics.

In the context of Islamic political studies and electoral behavior, this phenomenon opens up new space to further explore the interaction between religious identity, political affiliation, and party campaign strategies (Assyaukanie 2023). Further research is needed to deeply understand how this process occurs at the micro level, how political narratives are formed and disseminated, and how public perceptions of political actors are formed. In the context of Trenggalek, ethnographic and qualitative field studies can provide important contributions in explaining the motivations and considerations of NU members in choosing PKS, as well as its impact on socio-political life at the local level.

Thus, the importance of this research lies not only in its significance to local politics in Trenggalek, but also in its contribution to the national discourse

on the transformation of Islamic politics in Indonesia. Amidst the polarization of ideology and the discourse of political identity that is strengthening on a national scale, the dynamics of this kind of convergence can be an alternative model for building a more inclusive, rational, and public interest-oriented politics. Political strategies based on respect for tradition, openness to dialogue, and strengthening the capacity of public services can be the key to creating a healthy and sustainable local democratic ecosystem.

Finally, the phenomenon of electoral affiliation of NU Trenggalek residents to PKS confirms that Islamic politics in Indonesia is not monolithic. It is fluid, dynamic, and continues to transform along with the social and political changes that occur. The convergence between the two poles of Islam - traditional and modernist - is not impossible when there is space for dialogue, common interests, and an inclusive national narrative. The challenge ahead is how to manage this convergence so that it does not become a mere tool for political manipulation, but becomes a bridge for the realization of Islamic politics that is more substantial, down-to-earth, and liberating. Research based on literature reviews and sociological approaches is an effective way to understand and formulate the direction of the development of this convergence in a more comprehensive and academically responsible manner.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method (library research) as the main basis in examining the phenomenon of electoral affiliation of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) citizens in Trenggalek towards the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) from a sociological perspective. Literature review was chosen because it allows researchers to trace, identify, and analyze various relevant scientific references in explaining the dynamics of political identity, shifts in voter behavior, and the relationship between religious symbols and political preferences at the local level. This study focuses on the analysis of scientific documents, academic books, national and international journals, research reports, and the results of previous studies related to the theme of political identity, religious-based voter behavior, and the interaction between traditional Islamic groups such as NU and political parties with modernist Islamic ideology such as PKS.

The library sources analyzed were selected purposively based on their relevance to the research topic. Among the criteria used were: (1) relevance of the content to the theme of NU citizens' political identity and political affiliation; (2) actuality of publications within the last ten years to obtain a contextual understanding of current socio-political conditions; and (3) credibility of the sources, namely from recognized publishers or academic institutions. Through this approach, the researcher attempted to compile a theoretical and analytical synthesis of the symptoms of political affiliation that appeared to be shifting in the NU community in Trenggalek.

In the analysis, the researcher uses a sociological perspective by referring to social identity theory, Pierre Bourdieu's habitus theory, and social change theory. Social identity theory is used to explain how NU citizens' group identification is formed and how the interaction between religious identity and political identity influences electoral behavior. Bourdieu's habitus theory helps understand how NU citizens' habit patterns, values, and dispositions are formed in the socio-religious realm and how they experience transposition into the political realm when faced with PKS's political narratives and strategies.

Meanwhile, social change theory is used to examine the transformation of social structures that underlie the openness of some NU citizens to parties that were previously considered ideologically opposed.

Furthermore, the data analysis technique is carried out through content analysis of the documents that have been collected. This analysis process involves identifying themes, categorizing narratives, and drawing conclusions based on patterns of relationships between observed socio-political variables. The researcher also compared the results of previous studies that raised similar themes in other regions to obtain a comparative picture and validity of the findings in a broader context. Thus, this literature review approach is not only descriptive, but also analytical and interpretive, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the dilemma of NU citizens' political identity in the context of electoral affiliation with PKS.

Through this method, the research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the study of the sociology of Islamic politics in Indonesia, as well as being a practical reference for policy makers and political actors in building more inclusive and contextual political communication, especially in traditional Islamic communities such as NU.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Electoral Affiliation of NU Trenggalek Citizens with PKS in Sociological Perspective

The phenomenon of electoral politics in Indonesia often displays a complex reality and is not always linear with the religious identity or socio-religious affiliation of citizens. One interesting symptom that emerged in the elections in recent years is the emergence of support from some Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) citizens in Trenggalek for the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). Historically, PKS is known as a party based on modernist Islamic ideology that is identical to the campus da'wah movement and tarbiyah orientation that is quite different from the character of cultural Islam ala NU (Ichwan 2023). Therefore, the phenomenon of electoral affiliation of NU citizens with PKS in Trenggalek creates a political identity dilemma, where there is a shift in political preferences that are not entirely in line with the cultural and ideological identity of NU citizens. In this context, a sociological approach is important to understand the motives, backgrounds, and consequences of this shift.

Trenggalek as one of the regencies in East Java has a strong social base of NU citizens. The characteristics of NU which are traditional, moderate, and uphold local values have become an important foundation in the socio-religious structure of the Trenggalek community. However, in political practice, NU identity does not necessarily create homogeneity of political choices. This can be observed from the tendency of some NU citizens to choose PKS as their political channel. This dilemma lies in the tension between cultural identity and electoral preferences. Ideologically, PKS is perceived as bringing transnational Islamic ideology which is in contrast to the spirit of nationalism and Nusantara Islam carried by NU. However, in political reality, choices are not solely based on ideology, but are also influenced by instrumental factors, such as performance, personal relationships, and the pragmatic needs of the community (Wahyuni 2024).

Sociologically, the political affiliation of citizens cannot be understood only from the symbolic aspect or normative identity. Instead, it must be understood within the framework of social structure, social networks, and the

dynamics of existing social capital. Many NU citizens in Trenggalek are ideologically not in line with PKS, but they have social or patron-client relationships with local figures from PKS, such as business figures, young ustaz, or charismatic preachers who actively foster communities. This relationship creates bonds of trust and loyalty that are not solely determined by ideology, but by concrete social experiences. In this context, political identity is no longer essential, but rather becomes something that can be negotiated in the public sphere and the daily lives of society (Madinier 2021).

The support of NU members for PKS also reflects the transformation of the political orientation of society from being based on ideology to being more pragmatic and functional (Baso 2021). In many cases, citizens see PKS not as a mere ideological representation, but as a political entity that is considered effective in providing social services, education, and resource distribution. Social programs run by PKS cadres such as family religious studies, mosque youth activities, basic food assistance, and health services are a special attraction for the community. In sociological logic, what PKS does can be seen as a form of social capital that is developed to build trust and solidarity with citizens, even though they come from different Islamic traditions.

In political sociology studies, there is an important concept called **“fluid identity politics”**, which is a condition in which the political identity of a person or group is not fixed, but can change depending on the social context and pragmatic calculations. This seems to be the case in the case of the affiliation of NU Trenggalek residents with PKS. The NU identity does not necessarily make voters permanently tied to parties such as PKB or PPP. On the contrary, residents are starting to open up the possibility of affiliating with other parties that are considered to provide direct benefits or build emotional and social closeness. In this case, parties are not only required to voice ideology, but also to show a concrete presence in the daily lives of residents (Bruinessen 2024).

This condition creates a dilemma for NU members themselves, especially those who still uphold the ideological and cultural lines of NU. They are faced with the fact that some of their community are starting to “look” at parties that were previously considered ideologically different. This dilemma often arises in discussions in Islamic boarding schools, religious study groups, or NU organizations at the lower level, which question the legitimacy of the political choice of the community towards PKS. Some NU figures consider this as a form of identity uncertainty and a deviation from the organization's struggle line. However, others see it as a logical consequence of increasingly complex and dynamic changes in society.

From the perspective of sociological functionalism, this phenomenon can be understood as an effort by society to adapt to changing socio-political needs and demands. NU members' support for PKS can be seen as a form of adaptation to new political offers that are considered more relevant and profitable in certain conditions. In a society that is constantly changing, including in the economic and technological dimensions, political identity also experiences adjustments. Especially in rural and semi-urban communities such as Trenggalek, the existence of political parties is largely determined by the extent to which they are able to build networks and make real contributions in society, not merely on ideological narratives.

However, the conflict approach in sociology can also provide an explanation for this dilemma. In this view, the shift in political affiliation of NU members to PKS can be seen as a reflection of the tension between the local NU

political elite and the aspirations of the grassroots community. When the NU elite is considered too elitist, less responsive, or too tied to certain political patronage, then the community seeks other political alternatives that are considered more open and accommodating. PKS, in this context, plays a role as a political actor that offers alternative channels, including opening up participation space for the young generation of NU who have so far felt they have not received space in the traditional NU political structure. Thus, a kind of symbolic shift in power occurs, where PKS takes up the space left by the failure of the NU elite to maintain social connectivity with its base.

This political identity dilemma can also be analyzed through Pierre Bourdieu's habitus and symbolic capital approach. The NU habitus, which has been associated with tradition, simplicity, and a tolerant religious attitude, is now faced with new offers coming from parties such as PKS which are more structured, disciplined in their organization, and active in social services. Residents who are accustomed to traditional structures are starting to be attracted to the new model offered, without immediately abandoning their religious identity (Hosaini, Zikra and Situbondo 2022). This means that culturally they remain NU, but electorally they can choose PKS. This is where the mixing of NU's symbolic capital and PKS's socio-political capital occurs, which forms a new dynamic in Trenggalek's local politics.

This phenomenon is also closely related to generational change. The younger generation of NU, especially those with higher education, have more autonomous political preferences and are not ideologically bound. They tend to view politics rationally, pragmatically, and are open to new choices. For them, NU identity is no longer an absolute determinant in political affiliation, but rather only one variable in forming political preferences. In this case, PKS is able to take advantage of this gap by building a fresher political narrative, presenting dynamic young figures, and using social media effectively to reach young voters.

Institutionally, NU itself has actually long separated itself from practical politics. However, in local political reality, the attachment of NU members to certain parties such as PKB is still quite strong. Therefore, the emergence of support for PKS is often considered an anomaly. However, this anomaly actually shows that NU members at the grassroots are not monolithic. They have a diversity of political aspirations that continue to change depending on the social, economic, and cultural context. In this case, the dilemma of political identity is something that is natural and even healthy in the democratization process, as long as it remains within the constitutional corridor and does not lead to exclusive identity polarization.

In the context of political sociology, this identity dilemma needs to be managed wisely by all parties, including NU figures, political parties, and the wider community. It is important to understand that citizens' political preferences do not always reflect a betrayal of identity, but can be a form of expression of their broader hopes and needs. Therefore, instead of blaming citizens' choices, a dialogical and educational approach needs to be taken so that citizens critically understand the implications of each political choice they make. In closing, the dilemma of political identity between the NU affiliation of Trenggalek residents and support for PKS shows that local political dynamics cannot be read in black and white. This phenomenon must be seen in a broader sociological framework, including changes in social structure, transformation of values, and the development of new social and symbolic capital in society. By understanding this reality critically and constructively, we can open up space for

politics that are more inclusive, dynamic, and responsive to the real needs of society, without having to negate the cultural and religious identities that have long been the social foundation of this nation.

The phenomenon of electoral affiliation of some Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) residents in Trenggalek towards the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) Bottom of Form

The phenomenon of electoral affiliation of some Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) members in Trenggalek towards the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) has created a striking political dynamic that deserves special attention in the context of local political sociology. The emergence of support from NU members, who historically and culturally have an affinity with traditionalist Islamic ideology, towards PKS, which is known as a party based on a modernist Islamic da'wah movement and tends to be scripturalist, has created a phenomenon that is not only ideologically surprising, but also reflects a shift in the political orientation of society towards something more fluid, dynamic, and contextual. This phenomenon illustrates that in the flow of local political contestation, the boundaries of ideological identity are no longer permanent, but are flexible and can be negotiated according to the needs, perceptions, and rational calculations of society towards the political representation that they consider most beneficial in practice (Zulkifli 2017).

In the context of Trenggalek, as one of the regions with a very strong and deep-rooted NU citizen base, affiliation with PKS can be considered a significant symbolic shift. NU as a socio-religious organization has long been a stronghold of the religious traditions of Javanese society, especially in East Java, with the characteristics of wasathiyah Islam which is tolerant, inclusive, and thick with local culture. Therefore, the closeness of NU citizens to parties based on traditional Islamic ideology such as PKB or even PPP has so far been considered a reasonable representation of identity-based political loyalty. However, the reality on the ground shows that there are some NU citizens who openly or secretly support PKS, especially in legislative elections or even regional heads, due to pragmatic factors that are far from ideological narratives alone.

The support of some NU members for PKS represents a new dynamic in the increasingly complex local political configuration that can no longer be interpreted with a single identity approach. Society no longer makes ideological similarities the sole determinant in determining political choices. Instead, electoral preferences are increasingly determined by performance, social proximity, access to assistance or programs, and local political figures who are considered capable and trustworthy (Wahid 2018). This is in line with arguments in political sociology that emphasize that the political orientation of society is undergoing a transformation from symbolic identity to political functionalism, where political choices are more influenced by concrete experiences and rational calculations of the benefits obtained than ideological attachments.

This phenomenon also shows that political parties such as PKS have been able to carry out effective socio-political penetration in areas that were previously considered the traditional territory of cultural Islamic parties. PKS's strategy in building social relations through community approaches, social services, religious activities, and strengthening the cadre base is one of the key factors that attracts the sympathy of NU members. Even in several cases, PKS cadres actively approach NU members by not highlighting ideological attributes that have been a source of resistance, but rather focusing on social work, organizational discipline, and consistent service. This creates the impression that PKS is not just

a modernist Islamic-based political party, but is also able to adapt to local needs and display a more open face in political practices in the regions.

However, this support does not immediately eliminate the political identity dilemma experienced by the NU members concerned. Some of them realize that the choice of PKS has the potential to cause identity tension, both internally and within the wider NU community. This dilemma arises because, on the one hand, they feel they are directly benefiting from PKS's involvement in their social lives, but on the other hand, they feel that support for PKS can be interpreted as a betrayal of NU's cultural and ideological values. In this case, there is an inner conflict between pragmatic interests and symbolic loyalties that have long shaped their social identity (Noorhaidi 2020). This is a political identity dilemma that is not easy to overcome and requires a deep contextual understanding.

The concept of fluid political identity is very relevant to explain this phenomenon. The political identity of citizens is now flexible, can change depending on social dynamics, economic pressures, local figures, and changing expectations of political parties. Within this framework, NU citizens in Trenggalek can maintain cultural symbols of NU such as religious practices, tahlilan traditions, grave pilgrimages, and respect for kiai, but electorally can support parties such as PKS which have a different ideological basis (Hamed and Alehirish 2023). This phenomenon reflects the plurality of choices in society, which although on the surface seem contradictory, actually shows the socio-political intelligence of society in navigating the changing political landscape.

From the PKS side, this phenomenon is a strategic achievement in expanding its electoral base. With a personal and social approach strategy, and avoiding confrontational narratives that highlight ideological differences, PKS has succeeded in building a new perception as a more pragmatic, clean, and professional party (Hefner 2024). They have also succeeded in taking advantage of the negligence of traditional parties affiliated with NU, which in some cases are considered too elitist, less responsive to the needs of citizens, or trapped in internal conflicts. By entering through the gaps in citizens' disappointment with the old political elite, PKS has been able to offer a political alternative that is accepted by some NU citizens, albeit with ambivalent feelings.

Sociologically, the support of some NU members for PKS also shows how local social structures and informal networks play an important role in shaping political affiliation. In many cases, political decisions of citizens are not solely determined by ideology, but by social relationships built through social gatherings, Yasinan groups, school alumni networks, or even business relationships (Siregar 2023). If a respected local figure or religious figure supports or becomes a PKS cadre, then the surrounding residents tend to follow that choice for reasons of social solidarity or personal trust. In this case, political affiliation is formed more through social capital and interpersonal relationships than through rational-formal ideological calculations.

However, this phenomenon cannot be separated from the greater challenges to the sustainability of the political identity of NU members. As the boundaries between ideology and pragmatism begin to blur, there are concerns that NU values that emphasize tolerance, nationality, and diversity could be eroded by a more closed and exclusive political model. Although PKS at the local level may present a moderate face, in some national policies they still have ideologically conservative tendencies. Therefore, the involvement of NU members with PKS has the potential to become a tug-of-war between local

accommodation and ideological consistency at the central level. This is a serious challenge for NU as a socio-religious organization to maintain the integrity of its identity amidst increasingly pragmatic political tugs (Mujani and Liddle 2023).

On the other hand, this phenomenon can also be seen as an opportunity for NU to conduct an internal reflection on the political dynamics that occur within its members. The interest of some members in PKS shows the need for a refreshing way of doing politics that is more adaptive, open, and close to the members. NU as a large religious organization needs to strengthen political cadreship that is based on values and responsive to changes in the times. NU's backwardness in responding to the political needs of the younger generation and the lower classes can be exploited by other parties, including PKS, to build a new base. Therefore, efforts to strengthen the political literacy of NU members are very important so that they remain critical in determining their choices without losing the identity and noble values that have been inherited by the founders of the organization (Hosaini et al. n.d.).

This electoral affiliation phenomenon also shows that the democratization process has created a more open and plural political choice space. The tendency to go beyond the boundaries of traditional identity in determining political preferences is part of the process of democratic maturity. As long as these choices are made consciously, based on sufficient information, and do not lead to social polarization, then the diversity of citizens' political choices is actually a wealth in the democratic system. In this case, the identity dilemma experienced by NU Trenggalek citizens is part of a natural socio-political dialectic process, and is even productive in forming a political order that is more inclusive and reflective of the diversity of society (Supriadi, Hosaini, and Sain n.d.).

Overall, the affiliation of some NU Trenggalek residents to PKS reflects a paradigm shift in the local political map. This phenomenon is not just a shift in electoral choices, but also reflects a change in the social orientation of society towards political parties. Identity is no longer a rigid barrier, but something dynamic and can be reinterpreted in different contexts. In this dynamic, it is important to place political choices as part of a broader social process, involving power relations, social capital, cultural dynamics, and practical interests. Therefore, understanding this phenomenon requires a comprehensive sociological approach, taking into account the complexity of the relationship between identity, interests, and social structures that surround society.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of electoral affiliation of some Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) members in Trenggalek towards the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) reflects a complex political identity dilemma in the social and cultural context of the local community. Historically, NU is known as a traditionalist Islamic organization that upholds the values of tolerance, nationalism, and accommodation to local culture. Meanwhile, PKS has a more modernist, scripturalist ideological background and tends to be oriented towards formal Islamic preaching. The support of NU members for PKS, which was previously considered an "ideological opponent", indicates a shift in the pattern of political orientation that is no longer only based on shared identity, but also pragmatic considerations, social closeness, and perceptions of the effectiveness of party performance. From a sociological perspective, this phenomenon shows that political identity is not static, but rather fluid and can be negotiated according to social dynamics,

economic needs, and the collective experiences of citizens. The dilemma arises when NU members feel faced with a conflict between cultural loyalty to NU and political preference for PKS which is considered capable of providing practical solutions to their needs. Identity as NU members is maintained culturally and religiously, but electorally there is openness to ideologically different choices. This situation shows that in local democracy, citizens' political preferences are increasingly rational and multifactorial. However, this shift also poses a challenge for NU as a religious organization to maintain the continuity of the values and ideological orientation of its members. Thus, the dilemma of political identity that arises from this electoral affiliation is not only a matter of party choice, but a reflection of deeper social changes, concerning the dynamics of power, representation, and the need for an inclusive and adaptive political space in the midst of a society that continues to develop

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