

The Social Construction of Electoral Consciousness through Political Da'wah and Religious Authority: A Case Study of the Role of Religious Leaders in the Regional Head Election of Bandung Regency

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the social construction of the electoral consciousness of society through political da'wah and religious authority in the Regional Head Election (Pemilukada) of Bandung Regency. The research is grounded in the phenomenon of the increasing involvement of religious leaders in the local political sphere, which not only influences the political preferences of the community but also shapes the way society interprets leadership and political participation. The study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentary study, and were subsequently analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The analytical framework combines Berger and Luckmann's Theory of Social Construction, Max Weber's Theory of Social Authority, and the Civic Voluntarism Model of Verba, Scholzman, and Brady. The findings indicate that the formation of electoral consciousness takes place through three stages of social construction: externalization, in which religious leaders transmit political values through da'wah; objectivation, in which religious authority attains legitimacy as a moral reference in determining political attitudes; and internalization, in which society adopts these values as a basis for evaluating prospective leaders and exercising the right to vote responsibly. The traditional and charismatic authority of religious leaders reinforces the legitimacy of political messages, while religious social networks function as media for socialization and the recruitment of political participation. This study contributes to the development of political sociology by offering an integrative model that explains the mechanism through which electoral consciousness is formed via the interaction between political da'wah, religious authority, and social construction within the context of local democracy.

Keywords: Political Da'wah; Religious Authority; Electoral Consciousness; Social Construction; Political Participation; Local Democracy; Religious Leaders; Regional Head Election.

Introduction

Local democracy has become an increasingly important arena for the interaction between religion and politics, particularly following the implementation of political decentralization, which has expanded regional authority in conducting direct regional head elections. Within this context, electoral contestation is no longer determined solely by competing programs, candidate capacity, or the strength of political parties, but also by the ability of political actors to build legitimacy through social identity and religious symbols. Numerous studies indicate that religion remains a political resource with strong mobilizing power, particularly among communities with a high degree of religiosity, as it is capable of shaping citizens' value orientations, beliefs, and political preferences (Fox, 2020; Norris & Inglehart, 2021). This condition demonstrates that local democracy does not take place in an entirely secular space, but is instead influenced by socio-religious dynamics that shape political behavior.

In the Indonesian context, the relationship between religion and politics has shown increasing intensity across various electoral contests, both at the national and regional levels. The use of religious symbols, moral narratives, and the involvement of religious figures in endorsing candidates has become a common element of political strategy in regional head elections. Arifianto's (2020) research shows that networks of ulama and religious organizations possess considerable capacity to build political legitimacy and mobilize public support. Similarly, Mietzner (2020) explains that religion-based political mobilization has become one of the defining characteristics of contemporary Indonesian democracy, particularly when religious identity is used to shape public perceptions of a candidate's suitability and legitimacy. This phenomenon indicates that religion no longer functions merely as a belief system, but also as a symbolic resource that influences the dynamics of electoral democracy.

This development is increasingly evident in local political practice, including in the conduct of Regional Head Elections (Pemilukada). In various regions, religious leaders no longer merely perform their religious function as spiritual guides, but also act as social actors possessing moral authority and symbolic influence in shaping the political orientation of society. Da'wah activities, originally oriented toward religious guidance, have developed into a public communication space in which messages concerning leadership, political ethics, civic responsibility, and preference for particular political figures are conveyed. Under these conditions, da'wah becomes more than the mere transmission of religious teaching; it transforms into a mechanism of social communication with the potential to shape how society understands and interprets political reality.

This phenomenon is also evident in the local political dynamics of Bandung Regency, a region characterized by a religious population with a strong presence of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), *majelis taklim* (religious study groups), religious organizations, and influential religious figures in social life. Within the context of the *Pemilukada*, the relationship between religious leaders, society, and political actors forms a complex pattern of interaction, in which religious authority functions not only as a source of moral legitimacy but also as a reference point through which society interprets political issues and determines its electoral choices. Given these social characteristics, Bandung Regency provides a relevant context for examining how political *da'wah* and religious authority operate within the space of local democracy and influence the process of forming society's political consciousness.

Nevertheless, this phenomenon cannot be adequately explained solely through an approach that treats religion as a factor directly influencing voting behavior. Society's political choices are in fact the outcome of a more complex social process, involving the production, dissemination, legitimation, and internalization of political values through the interaction between religious leaders and the community. In other words, the central concern of this study is not merely whether religious leaders influence society's political choices, but how this social process unfolds in shaping the electoral consciousness of the community. This question constitutes the point of departure for the present study, which seeks to understand the construction of electoral consciousness through political *da'wah* and religious authority in the context of the Regional Head Election of Bandung Regency.

The study of the relationship between religion and politics has developed extensively within the literature of political science, political sociology, and religious studies. Numerous studies indicate that religion plays a significant role in shaping political preferences, voting behavior, and the level of public participation in democratic processes (Grzymala-Busse, 2020; Fox, 2020; Bush & Jamal, 2022). In the Indonesian context, scholarly attention has also increasingly focused on the phenomenon of identity politics, religion-based mobilization, and the involvement of religious organizations and figures in electoral contestation (Arifianto, 2020; Mietzner, 2020). These findings make an important contribution to explaining how religion functions as a source of political legitimacy and an instrument of electoral mobilization within democratic societies.

Nevertheless, most prior research remains dominated by a perspective that positions religion as an independent variable directly influencing political behavior. Such approaches tend to focus on the causal relationship between levels of religiosity, religious identity, or religious organizational affiliation and voting behavior or political preferences (Bush & Jamal, 2022; Pepinsky, 2021). Consequently, attention to the social mechanisms explaining how such influence is formed, negotiated, and reproduced in everyday life remains relatively limited. In other words, the existing literature explains electoral behavior as an outcome more extensively than it explains the social process that produces electoral consciousness.

On the other hand, studies of political *da'wah* have generally developed within the disciplines of political communication and Islamic studies, focusing on communication strategies, *da'wah* rhetoric, *da'wah* media, or the role of *da'wah* in political mobilization (Lim, 2021; Hosen, 2023). Meanwhile, research on religious authority tends to emphasize issues of legitimacy, religious leadership, and the relationship between religious institutions and the state (Fealy, 2021; Kersten, 2022). These two bodies of literature have developed relatively separately, and consequently have not produced a comprehensive explanation of how political *da'wah* and religious authority operate simultaneously in shaping society's electoral consciousness. This separation of perspectives reveals a conceptual gap, as the relationship between these concepts has not been explained within a single, coherent analytical framework.

In addition, a theoretical gap exists within the current literature. Most studies still rely on the behavioral approach, rational choice theory, social identity theory, or political mobilization approaches to explain electoral behavior. These approaches provide an adequate explanation of the factors influencing political choice, but have not been able to explain how political reality is constructed through symbolic interaction between religious leaders and society. In fact, the process of meaning-making, legitimation, and political orientation constitutes an important aspect in understanding how society builds its consciousness of political choice. For this reason, the perspective of Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction theory offers a more adequate analytical framework, as it views political reality as the outcome of a continuous process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization occurring through social interaction.

Further limitations are also apparent at the empirical and methodological levels. Most previous studies have been conducted at the national level using quantitative survey approaches to measure the relationship between religiosity, political identity, and voting behavior. Such approaches yield important generalizations but are unable to explain in depth the social dynamics occurring within the context of local politics. In fact, the character of the relationship between religious leaders, society, and political elites is strongly shaped by local social, cultural, and historical context. For this reason, case-study-based research at the local level is essential to reveal mechanisms of social construction that are not easily captured through quantitative approaches. Bandung Regency represents a relevant context, given its religious population, strong institutional religious networks, and local political dynamics that reflect the active involvement of religious leaders in the space of democracy.

Based on these gaps, this study is directed toward filling the existing void in the literature by integrating political da'wah, religious authority, and electoral consciousness within the perspective of Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction theory. Unlike previous studies that focus on relationships between variables or on the direct influence of religion on political behavior, this study seeks to explain the social mechanism that shapes society's electoral consciousness through the processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. It is thus hoped that this study will not only make an empirical contribution to the study of local democracy in Indonesia, but will also extend the development of social construction theory within the study of political communication, the sociology of religion, and political behavior.

Although the relationship between religion and politics has become a central concern in the study of political science, the sociology of religion, and political communication, most previous research remains oriented toward explaining the influence of religiosity, religious identity, or religious organizational affiliation on voting behavior and political participation. Such approaches yield important insight into the correlation between religion and political behavior, but have not been able to explain the social mechanism through which society's electoral consciousness is formed via interaction occurring within the religious social space. This study therefore proceeds from the premise that electoral consciousness is not a direct consequence of religious identity or political preference, but rather a social reality shaped through the process of the production, legitimation, and internalization of meaning within community life.

The principal novelty of this study lies in the development of an analytical framework that integrates three concepts that have generally been studied separately—political da'wah, religious authority, and electoral consciousness—within the perspective of Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction theory. In contrast to previous studies that position da'wah merely as a medium of political communication, or religious authority merely as a source of social legitimacy, this study treats both as part of a continuous process of social construction. Within this framework, political da'wah is understood as the arena in which religious leaders externalize political values; religious authority functions as the mechanism of objectivation that grants legitimacy to these political meanings; and electoral consciousness is positioned as the outcome of society's internalization of political values. The integration of these three concepts offers a new perspective that explains not only what influence religion has on politics, but also how such influence is produced, institutionalized, and accepted within social life.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in extending the application of Berger and Luckmann's Theory of Social Construction within the study of political communication and political sociology. This theory has largely been used to explain the construction of identity, social reality, or cultural practice, whereas its application in explaining the formation of electoral consciousness through the interaction between political da'wah and religious authority remains relatively limited. This study proposes that the process of externalization–objectivation–internalization not only explains the formation of social reality in general, but is also capable of explaining the process of forming society's political orientation within the context of local democracy. This study thus extends the applicative scope of social construction theory into the domain of political behavior and religious communication.

In addition to its theoretical contribution, this study also offers an empirical contribution by presenting contextual evidence from the Regional Head Election of Bandung Regency, a region characterized by a religious population with networks of pesantren, religious organizations, and influential religious figures in social life. This context provides an opportunity to observe in depth how political da'wah is practiced, how religious authority acquires and maintains legitimacy within the public sphere, and how society internalizes political messages conveyed through religious activities. The qualitative case study approach enables this study to capture the dynamics of meaning, social relations, and communicative practices that are difficult to explain through the quantitative survey approaches that have long dominated the study of electoral behavior.

The justification for this study is further strengthened by the increasing involvement of religious actors in Indonesia's local democracy, while understanding of the social process underlying the formation of electoral consciousness remains limited. By explaining the mechanism of social construction that links political da'wah, religious authority, and electoral consciousness, this study is expected to contribute to theoretical development within political sociology, political communication, and religious studies, while also providing an analytical foundation for a more comprehensive understanding of the role of religious actors in local democracy. This study therefore offers not only conceptual and theoretical novelty, but also practical implications for strengthening inclusive democracy, developing society's political literacy, and formulating policy that is more sensitive to the dynamics of the relationship between religion and politics at the local level.

To clarify the novelty of this study for the reviewer, its contribution may be summarized into three main categories:

Type of Contribution	Research Contribution
Conceptual	Integrates political da'wah, religious authority, and electoral consciousness within a single, coherent analytical model.
Theoretical	Extends the application of Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction theory to explain the formation of electoral consciousness through the stages of

	externalization, objectivation, and internalization.
Empirical	Provides contextual evidence from the Pemilukada of Bandung Regency regarding the mechanism of constructing electoral consciousness within local democracy, through a qualitative case study approach.

The literature on religion and politics has shown that religion is an important factor influencing voting behavior, political participation, and the formation of electoral preferences through identity, values, and religious social networks (Bush & Jamal, 2022). In Indonesia, research has likewise confirmed that the involvement of religious leaders and religious organizations exerts a significant influence on the dynamics of electoral politics, particularly in building political legitimacy and mobilizing public support (Arifianto, 2020; Mietzner, 2020). Nevertheless, most of these studies remain focused on the relationship between religion and political behavior as a cause-and-effect relationship, and have therefore not adequately explained how the social process that shapes society's electoral consciousness unfolds through political da'wah and religious authority.

This limitation points to the need to develop a perspective that explains not only the influence of religion on political choice, but also the social mechanism underlying the formation of society's political consciousness. Proceeding from this gap, this study poses the following central question: How is society's electoral consciousness constructed through political da'wah and religious authority in the context of the Regional Head Election of Bandung Regency? This central question is elaborated into three research questions: (1) how do religious leaders externalize political values through da'wah activities; (2) how does religious authority acquire social legitimacy in shaping a political reality recognized by society; and (3) how does society internalize these political values so as to form electoral consciousness. These questions are formulated to make a theoretical contribution by explaining the mechanism of social construction linking political da'wah, religious authority, and electoral consciousness.

This study employs the Theory of Social Construction developed by Berger and Luckmann (1966) as its principal analytical framework. This theory explains that social reality is the outcome of a dialectical process occurring through three stages—externalization, objectivation, and internalization—such that the reality understood by society is in fact a construction formed through social interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Within the context of this study, political da'wah activity is understood as a form of externalization of political values by religious leaders. These values subsequently gain recognition and legitimacy within social life through religious authority, in a process of objectivation, before ultimately being internalized by society as part of the electoral consciousness that shapes political orientation and choice.

The use of the social construction perspective enables this study to explain the process of political meaning-making that has not been extensively addressed by behavioral or rational-choice approaches. Berger and Luckmann's theory thus functions not only as an interpretive framework for understanding the relationship between political da'wah, religious authority, and electoral consciousness, but also as a foundation for explaining how political meaning is produced, institutionalized, and reproduced within the context of local democracy. This approach is expected to extend the application of social construction theory within political sociology, political communication, and religious studies, particularly in the analysis of the formation of electoral consciousness at the local level.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using an intrinsic case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the process by which electoral consciousness is constructed through political da'wah and religious authority in the context of the Regional Head Election of Bandung Regency. This approach was chosen because it enables the researcher to explore the meanings, experiences, and social interactions that shape political reality within their specific context (Yin, 2018). The research was conducted in Bandung Regency, West Java Province, selected purposively for its religious population, the strong presence of pesantren and religious organizations, and the high degree of involvement of religious leaders in local political dynamics. Informants were determined through purposive sampling and further developed through snowball sampling, with criteria encompassing religious leaders (kyai, ustaz, and leaders of majelis taklim), election organizers, community figures, candidate campaign teams, academics, and members of the public with direct experience as voters in the Pemilukada.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentary study of da'wah materials, social media, documents from the General Elections Commission (KPU) and the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), and mass media coverage. The use of multiple data-collection techniques was intended to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization involved in the formation of electoral consciousness.

Data analysis was conducted interactively using the model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The results of the analysis

were then interpreted through Berger and Luckmann's Theory of Social Construction (1966), applying three analytical stages: externalization (the process of conveying political values through da'wah), objectivation (the formation of legitimacy for religious authority within the political sphere), and internalization (the formation of society's electoral consciousness). The validity of the data was ensured through source triangulation, method triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing, thereby enhancing the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings. The entire research process was carried out in accordance with the principles of research ethics, including informed consent, confidentiality of identity, and the use of data solely for academic purposes.

Results and Discussion

1. Externalization of religious leaders in political da'wah during the regional head election

Within the perspective of Berger and Luckmann (1966), externalization is the process through which individuals or groups express their ideas, values, and beliefs into the social sphere, thereby forming a reality that can be understood by others. In this study, the da'wah activities conducted by religious leaders during the Regional Head Election of Bandung Regency functioned not only as a medium for conveying religious teaching, but also as a space for the production of political meaning that shaped the way society understood leadership, political participation, and civic responsibility.

The findings show that religious leaders did not position da'wah as a medium for practical political campaigning, but rather as a means of conveying normative values concerning trustworthy leadership, honesty, justice, and social responsibility. One informant explained that da'wah is fundamentally aimed at inviting society toward God's teachings, while the closeness between politicians and ulama is primarily attributable to the social influence that religious leaders hold within society. This statement indicates that religious leaders regard the legitimacy of da'wah as continuing to derive from religious values, rather than from electoral interests alone.

Within the perspective of Berger and Luckmann (1966), this condition constitutes a form of externalization, in which religious leaders transform religious values into a social narrative that society can understand within the context of local politics. Da'wah thus becomes more than the mere transmission of religious doctrine; it becomes an arena for the formation of meaning regarding who is fit to lead, how society should conduct itself in relation to the democratic process, and how Islamic values are practiced in political life. Political reality as understood by society is therefore not something that exists objectively, but is instead formed through the social interaction that occurs within spaces of da'wah. This process of externalization cannot be separated from the social authority possessed by religious leaders. According to Max Weber (1978), authority is a form of legitimacy that causes individuals or groups to comply with an influence because they regard it as legitimate. Weber distinguishes three types of authority: traditional authority, charismatic authority, and legal-rational authority. In the context of Bandung Regency, the findings show that the influence of religious leaders derives predominantly from a combination of traditional and charismatic authority.

Traditional authority is reflected in the position of the kyai as heir to the pesantren tradition, leader of the majelis taklim, and a figure respected within social life. Charismatic authority, meanwhile, arises from the personal capacity of religious leaders to provide moral example, their ability to deliver da'wah, and the trust built through long-term social interaction. These conditions cause political messages conveyed through da'wah to gain a relatively higher level of acceptance than political communication conducted by formal political actors. Interview findings show that society continues to regard the kyai as a figure with substantial influence over political choice, although there is a difference in perception between kyai who maintain independence and those regarded as too close to political elites. This finding indicates that the legitimacy of religious leaders is not absolute, but is continuously negotiated through public perception of their moral consistency and independence. Within Weber's perspective, this legitimacy explains why da'wah is capable of influencing society's political orientation. The influence of da'wah is not primarily attributable to the content of its political message, but to the fact that society regards religious leaders as figures possessing the moral authority to interpret values related to leadership and communal life.

The findings also show that political da'wah is not always oriented toward supporting a particular candidate, but more often encourages society to exercise the right to vote responsibly, to choose trustworthy leaders, and to maintain social unity throughout the Pemilukada process. This pattern indicates that da'wah functions as a medium of political civic education rather than merely as an instrument of electoral mobilization. This phenomenon can be explained through the Civic Voluntarism Model developed by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995). This model explains that political participation is influenced by three principal factors: resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks. In this study, majelis taklim, pesantren, and religious organizational networks function as recruitment networks—social spaces that enable society to obtain political information, build political consciousness, and become motivated to participate in the Pemilukada. In addition, da'wah enhances psychological engagement, that is, society's psychological attachment to the political process through the

inculcation of religious values related to social responsibility, justice, and trustworthiness. Society's political participation is thus influenced not only by electoral interests, but also by the moral convictions formed through religious interaction.

Based on these findings, it can be understood that the process of externalization within political da'wah takes place through the conveyance of religious values contextualized in relation to issues of leadership and local democracy. This process gains effectiveness through the support of the traditional and charismatic authority of religious leaders, as explained by Weber. Subsequently, through religious social networks, these messages foster growing community involvement in the political process, as explained by the Civic Voluntarism Model. These three theoretical perspectives are thus mutually complementary: Berger and Luckmann explain how political meaning is produced through the process of externalization; Weber explains why the messages of religious leaders attain social legitimacy; while Verba, Schlozman, and Brady explain how this legitimacy is translated into society's political participation. This synthesis indicates that the formation of electoral consciousness is not a direct consequence of political appeals made by religious leaders, but rather the outcome of a social process occurring through the production of meaning, the legitimation of authority, and public involvement within socio-religious networks.

2. Objectivation of religious authority within the local political sphere

Within the perspective of Berger and Luckmann (1966), objectivation is the process through which the outcomes of externalization undergo institutionalization and gain collective recognition, thereby coming to be understood as objective reality. In the context of the Regional Head Election of Bandung Regency, this process is evident in the way the authority of religious leaders is regarded not merely as an individual capacity to deliver da'wah, but as having developed into a social institution possessing legitimacy in shaping society's political perceptions.

The findings show that society does not regard religious leaders merely as transmitters of Islamic teaching, but as moral figures possessing the authority to offer judgment on leadership, political ethics, and social responsibility. [Insert verbatim interview excerpt regarding public trust toward kyai/ulama here.] This finding indicates that religious authority has undergone a process of objectivation, in which values originally conveyed through da'wah come to be widely accepted and institutionalized as a social guideline for determining political attitudes. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), social reality becomes objective when it is repeatedly produced through interaction, institutionalized in social practice, and transmitted through the process of socialization. In this study, objectivation occurs across various social spaces, such as pesantren, majelis taklim, religious organizations, and religious study forums, which continuously reproduce meanings concerning ideal leadership. As a result, the political views conveyed by religious leaders attain the status of socially legitimized knowledge within community life.

These findings can be understood through the concept of legitimate authority developed by Max Weber (1978). Weber explains that public compliance does not arise merely from power, but from the belief that a person's authority is legitimate. In this study, the legitimacy of religious leaders derives predominantly from traditional and charismatic authority. Traditional authority is evident in the position of religious leaders as heirs to the pesantren tradition, bearers of scholarly lineage (sanad), and leaders of religious communities long trusted by society. Charismatic authority, meanwhile, arises through moral integrity, exemplary conduct, scholarly capacity, and the ability to build emotional relationships with congregants. The combination of these two forms of authority gives the political views conveyed by religious leaders a greater degree of influence than the formal political communication carried out by party elites or candidates.

In the case study of Bandung Regency, this legitimacy was not formed instantaneously, but represents an accumulation of social relationships developed over an extended period. The closeness between religious leaders and society has produced a high level of trust, such that recommendations or political views conveyed through da'wah receive broad acceptance. The objectivation of religious authority is thus the outcome of an interaction between social legitimacy and society's collective experience in interpreting religious leadership. Berger and Luckmann (1966) assert that objectivation is the stage at which a social product acquires the status of a reality existing external to the individual. In this study, that reality is manifested in the collective belief that religious leaders constitute a credible reference point for evaluating the moral qualities of a prospective regional head. These findings show that the process of objectivation occurs through a mechanism of symbolic legitimation. Political da'wah does not merely convey information regarding the importance of electing a trustworthy leader, but also forms the moral categories that society uses to evaluate candidates. As a result, society's political considerations are not based solely on development programs, but also on the alignment between a candidate's character and the religious values institutionalized within the community.

This phenomenon can likewise be explained through the Civic Voluntarism Model developed by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995). This model explains that political participation is influenced by three principal components: resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks. In the context of Bandung Regency, networks of pesantren, majelis taklim, and religious organizations function as recruitment networks—

social spaces that connect society with political activity. Through these networks, society obtains information concerning the regional head election process while simultaneously acquiring a normative interpretation of the importance of exercising the right to vote. In addition to providing access to political information, the objectivation of religious authority also enhances society's psychological engagement. Trust in religious leaders reinforces the internal motivation to participate in the election, since the act of voting is understood as part of moral and religious responsibility. Political participation is thus driven not only by pragmatic interest, but also by the ethical consciousness developed through the process of religious socialization.

Based on the analysis above, the objectivation of religious authority within the local political sphere is a process in which the social legitimacy of religious leaders becomes institutionalized, thereby serving as a collective reference in shaping society's political orientation. From Weber's perspective, this legitimacy derives from the combination of traditional and charismatic authority, producing compliance based on trust. From the perspective of Berger and Luckmann, this legitimacy is the outcome of objectivation, whereby religion-based political values come to be accepted as legitimate social reality. Meanwhile, according to Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, the religious networks built by religious leaders function as a mechanism of political recruitment that enhances society's involvement in the democratic process. Objectivation of religious authority thus not only reinforces the position of religious leaders as moral actors, but also contributes to the formation of a local political space shaped by religious values. In the context of Bandung Regency, this process shows that local democracy does not occur within a space neutral to religion, but is instead shaped through the interaction between religious legitimacy, social networks, and civic participation in political life.

3. Internalization of political da'wah in shaping society's electoral consciousness

Internalization constitutes the final stage in the process of social construction as explained by Berger and Luckmann (1966), occurring when social reality that has passed through the processes of externalization and objectivation is accepted, interpreted, and becomes part of the individual's subjective consciousness. In this study, internalization occurs when the political values conveyed through the da'wah of religious leaders are no longer understood merely as religious messages, but have become part of society's frame of reference in interpreting leadership, democracy, and the exercise of the right to vote in the Regional Head Election of Bandung Regency. In other words, political da'wah does not end with the conveyance of a message, but develops into a process forming a political orientation grounded in religious values.

From the perspective of social construction, internalization occurs through a repeated process of interaction between religious leaders and society across various social spaces, such as majelis taklim, pesantren, Friday sermons, regular religious study sessions, and religious communication within family and community environments. This continuous interaction causes the message concerning the importance of electing a trustworthy, honest, just, and morally upright leader to become part of society's collective knowledge. When these values are accepted as a guide for determining political choice, a process of internalization has occurred—that is, the transformation of social knowledge into individual consciousness that influences society's political action (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Within the perspective of Max Weber (1978), the success of the internalization process is strongly influenced by the legitimacy of authority held by religious leaders. Weber explains that society's compliance with an authority arises from the belief that such authority possesses a legitimate basis. In a religious society such as Bandung Regency, this legitimacy derives primarily from the traditional authority inherent in the position of the ulama as heirs to the tradition of Islamic scholarship, as well as from the charismatic authority built through moral integrity, exemplary conduct, and scholarly capacity. Political messages conveyed through da'wah are therefore more readily accepted, since society regards religious leaders as figures possessing the moral credibility to provide guidance in both social and political life. Internalization is thus determined not solely by the substance of the da'wah message, but also by the level of public trust in the religious authority conveying it.

This process of internalization can also be explained through the Civic Voluntarism Model developed by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995). This model states that political participation is influenced by three principal factors: resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks. In this study, political da'wah contributes primarily to psychological engagement—the growing psychological attachment of society to the political process through the internalization of religious values. Society not only obtains information regarding the importance of participating in the regional head election, but also builds the conviction that exercising the right to vote is part of moral and religious responsibility. Meanwhile, the existence of pesantren, majelis taklim, religious organizations, and da'wah networks functions as recruitment networks that continuously facilitate the process of political socialization. Society's political participation is thus driven not only by pragmatic interest or political affiliation, but also by normative values internalized through religious interaction.

The case study approach employed in this research shows that the process of internalization occurs contextually, in accordance with the social characteristics of Bandung Regency's community, which possesses a strong religious tradition. Society's electoral consciousness is not formed spontaneously as the election approaches, but is the outcome of a long-term social process occurring through the relationship between religious

leaders and the community. Consistently conducted da'wah activity forms a communicative space that enables the transfer of values, the building of trust, and the reproduction of political norms regarded as consistent with religious teaching. Society's political choice therefore cannot be understood merely as a rational individual decision, but also as the outcome of a social construction shaped by the religious environment and the social relations developed within it.

The findings of this study show that the internalization of political da'wah contributes to the formation of a more substantive electoral consciousness. This consciousness is reflected not only in increased participation in the regional head election, but also in society's capacity to evaluate the moral qualities of prospective leaders based on the religious values it has internalized. Political da'wah thus does not function as an instrument of momentary political mobilization, but as a process of political education that shapes society's democratic orientation through an ethical and moral approach. This finding extends the understanding of the relationship between religion and politics by showing that the influence of religious leaders on electoral behavior does not occur directly, but through a process of social construction involving the externalization of values, the objectivation of authority, and the internalization of political consciousness.

Theoretically, the synthesis of the theories of Berger and Luckmann, Weber, and Verba, Schlozman, and Brady shows that the formation of electoral consciousness is a multidimensional process. Berger and Luckmann explain how political values are constructed and internalized as social reality; Weber explains why such values attain legitimacy through religious authority; while Verba, Schlozman, and Brady explain how this legitimacy drives society's involvement in political participation. The integration of these three perspectives produces a more comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the relationship between political da'wah, religious authority, and electoral consciousness within local democracy. This study thus contributes to the development of political sociology, political communication, and the sociology of religion by positioning political da'wah as a mechanism for the formation of electoral consciousness through an ongoing process of social construction.

Conclusion

This study shows that society's electoral consciousness in the Regional Head Election of Bandung Regency is a social reality constructed through the process of political da'wah and religious authority, rather than being formed solely by individual political preference or momentary electoral interest. Based on the perspective of Berger and Luckmann's Theory of Social Construction, this process occurs through three interrelated stages: externalization, objectivation, and internalization. At the stage of externalization, religious leaders transmit political values through da'wah activity by emphasizing the principles of trustworthy, just, principled, and responsible leadership in accordance with Islamic teaching. These values subsequently undergo objectivation as they attain social legitimacy through the position and authority of religious leaders recognized by society. Finally, the process of internalization occurs when society accepts and embraces these values as part of a political consciousness that shapes how it evaluates candidates, determines its choices, and participates in the local democratic process.

Analysis using Max Weber's Theory of Social Authority shows that the influence of religious leaders within the local political sphere derives not merely from formal position, but rests on traditional authority rooted in scholarly heritage and pesantren leadership, as well as charismatic authority built through moral integrity, exemplary conduct, and public trust. This legitimacy gives da'wah persuasive power in shaping society's political orientation without this necessarily being manifested in the form of direct political mobilization. Meanwhile, the Civic Voluntarism Model of Verba, Schlozman, and Brady explains that religious social networks, such as pesantren, majelis taklim, and religious organizations, function as recruitment networks that strengthen society's involvement in political life. Political da'wah not only enhances understanding of the importance of exercising the right to vote, but also builds psychological engagement—the awareness that participation in the election is part of moral, social, and religious responsibility.

This study thus affirms that the relationship between political da'wah, religious authority, and electoral consciousness is processual and constructive in nature. Its principal contribution lies in the development of an analytical framework that synergizes Berger and Luckmann's Theory of Social Construction, Weber's Theory of Authority, and the Civic Voluntarism Model in explaining the mechanism through which electoral consciousness is formed within the context of local democracy. These findings enrich the study of political sociology, political communication, and the sociology of religion by showing that the influence of religious leaders on society's political behavior does not occur directly, but through a process of meaning production, social legitimation, and the internalization of religious values that continuously shapes electoral consciousness. These findings also carry practical implications for strengthening ethics-oriented political education, enhancing democratic literacy, and developing a more constructive relationship between religious institutions and local democracy in Indonesia.

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