

Public Perception of Islamic Political Parties Ahead of the 2024 General Elections in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to map public perceptions of political parties ahead of the 2024 election contestation. Public trust in the performance of political parties fluctuates along with political and economic dynamics. Indonesia's political conditions ahead of the 2024 elections are filled with sensitive issues that allow public reactions to the performance of the government and the performance of political parties as a government support system. This research will use a quantitative study approach using data from 180 respondents divided into six provinces on the island of Java, namely Banten, DKI Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, East Java, and DI Yogyakarta. The theoretical approach used to dissect public perceptions with the ABC Theory approach which focuses on the assessment of Attention, Behaviour, and Cognition. The combination of the three will show how the public assesses political parties, and provide an overview of the performance of political parties so far to influence public perception. Public credibility towards parties is a complex issue. The ups and downs of public trust in a party are commonplace and unavoidable. It happens because it is caused by several factors, political factors are reasons or causes that arise from the political aspects of people who do not want to vote. Such as distrust of the party, not being able to vote for existing candidates, or not believing that legislative elections/elections will bring change and improvement. Public distrust of political parties is not only caused by the behavior of party politicians but is also influenced by the performance of the party as a whole and this also has an impact on the image of political parties which ultimately affects public perceptions of the party concerned. In the reform era, political parties did not have a firm political orientation and program. The consequence is that parties fail to represent the aspirations of the community because they do not narrow their political orientation and work programs to specific issues that occur in the community. After all, each party tries to cover all dimensions of the problem without a platform. This makes people's votes in every election seem futile because every aspiration and work program promised does not solve all the social problems they have faced so far. Moreover, when people only get promises of welfare before the election then afterward their relationship with the party never seems to be close, because when political parties have gotten their political needs after the election, they slowly withdraw from the community without completing the narratives that have been started. Community participation in elections is not only limited to involvement in the political process, but more than that they expect a change for the better in line with the will of the community together.

Keywords: *Perception, public, election, political party, cognition*

INTRODUCTION

Public perception is a necessity that must be formed by political parties in the tradition of direct election democratic competition such as in Indonesia (Fox and Menchik 2022). The

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public has absolute power to determine political choices based on individual considerations and exposure to external information. The formation of public perception is not just a matter that takes place naturally, there are special strategies played by democratic contestants in conditioning public perception. The role of the media in disseminating information massively and continuously is the most colossal idea in shaping public perception. In the era of social media or new media, the role of an amplifier or buzzer account has become a new epicenter in conditioning public perception, or their work is known as political buzzers.

According to Dan Nimmo in his work, political humans or political communicators are those who professionally sell their services in delivering political messages either in the form of pro-government or counter-narratives from the government. Since the new media era, the political dramaturgical stage has shifted from conventional media to new media such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and so on. Social engineering in shaping public perception is carried out as a form of strategy for gaining public support. Because electability must be driven by a strong introduction and socialization process.

The formation of public perceptions that are sometimes far from reality in Islamic political parties is often intertwined with religious issues (Jahan and Shahan 2014). Often the excessive use of religious issues will harm Islamic political parties because the tendency of obedience is easily associated with religious fanaticism (Sakai and Fauzia 2014). As experienced by PKS, which in the early days was known for its consistency in religious issues and adherence to sharia, it was later stigmatized as a puritanical party and potentially trapped in the radicalism movement (Butt 2012; Tanuwidjaja 2012). The battle between Islamic and nationalist political parties cannot be separated in Indonesian democracy (Nurjaman, Suprpto, and Masmuh 2018). The struggle for public votes between Islamic and nationalist political parties initially had different niches, namely the *abangan*, and the *santri* or militant, but these segments have now begun to bias along with the passage of time and the development of knowledge related to politics and democracy.

The image of Islamic political parties should no longer be limited to the political frame of sharia but should be able to frame itself far beyond the sectoral interests of the ummah (Hefner 2011; Miichi 2007). Because voters from among Muslims are not only driven by Islamic ideology but also the issue of the party's ability to provide future religious solutions or post-Islamism issues (Argenti et al. 2022). By thinking progressively, Islamic political parties will be able to sell themselves professionally and have a more comprehensive quality of work programs (Ahmad 2021).

Many academics have written about public perceptions of Islamic political parties in Indonesia. This research will look objectively at how the public perceives Islamic political parties in three specific approaches, namely general public perception, public perception based on ABC The 3 Components of Attitude theory (affective, behavioral, and cognitive theory) and finally looking at the relationship between the public and political parties using indicators of domination, pluralism and integration. In addition, we will look at several factors that assume the formation of public perceptions of Islamic political parties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public perception

Public perception is an opinion on a statement regarding a controversial issue. Public perception has 2 (two) elements consisting of statements and controversial issues. In the framing of Islamic political parties, public perception is often limited to religious rhetoric and image-building based on a religious approach (Hajjaj 2021). The formation of public

perception should be based on the ability of Islamic political parties to frame the interests of the ummah in their political steps so that they can represent the interests of the ummah and public loyalty can be constructed (Ciftci 2018; Schuster 2020).

In research written by Auerbach, it is said that the party's strength in shaping public loyalty is to build networks with the public, and there is clear accountability and involvement in public issues (Auerbach 2022). In addition, public perceptions of political parties must be encouraged to an Islamic identity that is tolerant, and Islamic civic and civil pluralism (Al Qurtuby 2020). Today, Islamic political parties are often trapped in representing the ideology of Islamic organizations so they tend to limit voters (Nastiti and Ratri 2018).

ABC Theory

ABC theory (The 3 Components of Attitude) is a theory used to help define attitudes and deconstruct them to see what can happen (Harreveld, Nohlen, and Schneider 2015; Ö, Akbaba, and Olkun 2010). In this theory, affect can influence behavior rather than cognition in doing things impulsively. Structured attitudes in ABC theory consist of 3 (three) components. The combination of the three when used as an indicator will show that the public can be mobilized with one of the 3 elements or all the elements in it (Khalil et al. 2020; Liu et al. 2021). The three components are:

- a. Affective, refers to how we feel about things. It usually tends to be a reaction to an event.
- b. Behavioural, refers to human behavior based on the stimulus received.
- c. Cognitive, is what is in human knowledge.

METHODS

This research uses a quantitative approach involving 180 respondents divided into six provinces on the island of Java, namely Banten, DKI Jakarta, DI Yogyakarta, West Java, Central Java and East Java. Sampling was done by purposive random sampling to allow everyone to become a respondent according to their own wishes with certain conditions. The requirements to become a respondent are Indonesian citizens and are over 17 years old or already have the right to vote in the general election contestation. Java was chosen because it is the region with the largest number of voters. Based on data from the KPU, there are around 57.29% of the total voting rights in Indonesia².

² <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20190412163120-32-385766/menaklukkan-jawa-menguasai-indonesia-di-pemilu>

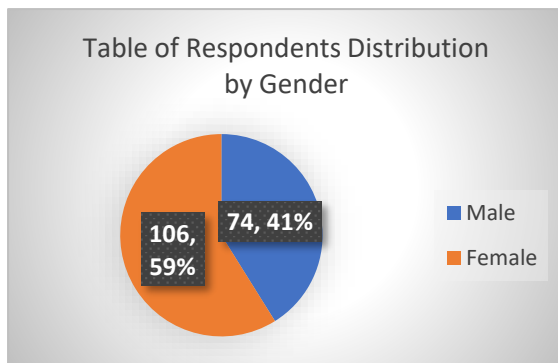


Figure 1. Table of Respondents by Gender

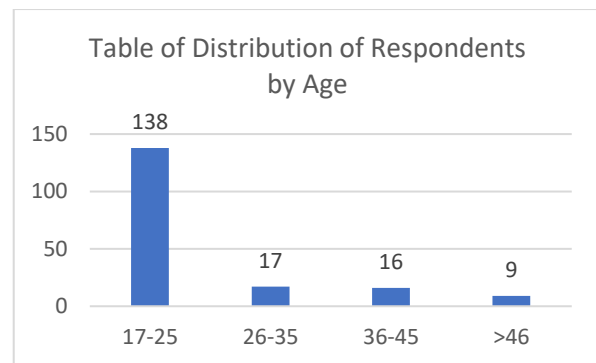


Figure 2. Table of Distribution by Age

Overall, the respondents were divided into two categories, namely men and women with a total composition of 59% versus 41%. In this case, women's interest in filling out the questionnaire is higher than men's attention even though men tend to favor political talks, while in terms of age, the distribution of respondents is dominated by young voters with an age range of 17-25 years or in the category of novice voters.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Public Perception of Islamic Political Parties

Political dynamics cannot be separated from public perceptions of political parties. In the idealism of democracy, the people or voters have control over their political choices. However, many internal and external factors influence their perceptions which lead to their political choices. Parties are trying to gain public attention ahead of the 2024 election contestation. They make every effort to convince the public that they are the right party as a medium to convey public aspirations in parliament or the executive.

This dynamic creates a fluctuation in society where the position of public perception can be observed to see the extent of public attention to elections and to political parties. this research uses audience research with a quantitative approach to obtain objective data from the public directly. Public perception so far shows a medium position with a quantity of 65% of all respondents. While public perceptions in high or low positions are equally divided by 17% and 18% in low perceptions. An analysis can be drawn that the public still has a positive perception of political parties ahead of the 2024 election contestation, although most of the perceptions are only in the medium range. The public who is skeptical of politics and parties is not too significantly influential because it only ranges from 18%. This could be due to the residue of previous politics that left some parties disappointed. It should be noted that the 2019 presidential election contest between Jokowi and Prabowo was very fierce, but left a political plot twist when Prabowo as the losing party took an offer as Minister of Defence in the Jokowi government. This left a deep disappointment in the public, especially the fanatical supporters of Prabowo and his supporting parties.

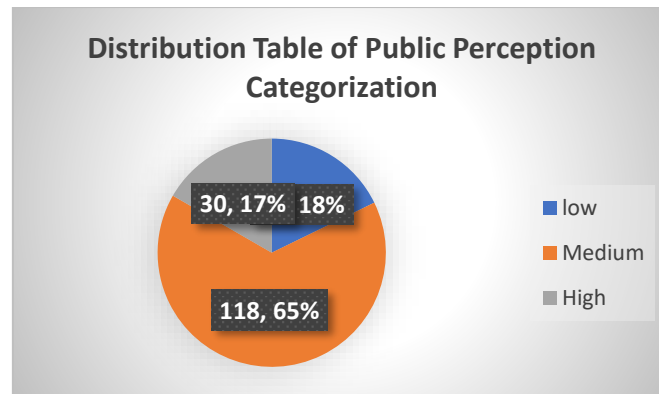


Figure 3. Distribution Table of Public Perception Categorization

The next finding in this research tries to measure public perception based on the ABC theory (The 3 Components of Attitude) which is a theory to define an attitude and public view based on three elements namely affective, behavioural and cognitive. Affective-based reactions rely on feelings such as fear-based reactions, joy or anxiety. Behavioural refers to the choice of public behaviour and cognitive refers to what is in the public mind. From the approach taken based on the indicators of the three, it is obtained that the public perception of political parties ahead of the 2024 general election is in the dominant medium with 64% or 116 of the total respondents.

The results obtained are not much different from the previous data, except that the public who has a positive or high perception of political parties has increased to 23%. Meanwhile, those who are apathetic decreased to 13%. This is because some responses show that the affection indicators are not directly proportional to behavioral and cognitive. The public may be disappointed with political parties but they still have the enthusiasm to follow political developments or the willingness to attend polling stations.

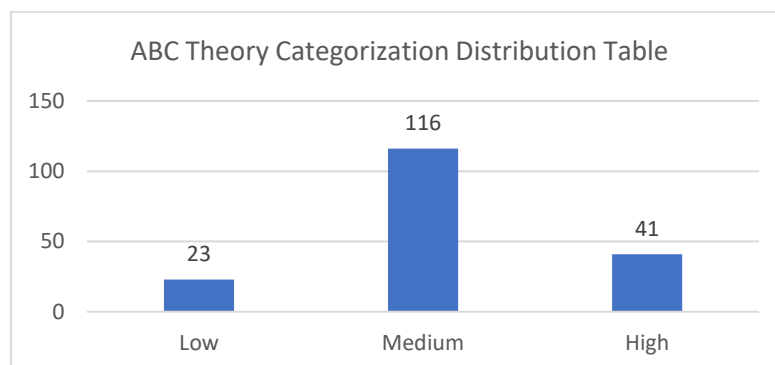


Figure 4. ABC Theory Categorization Distribution Table

The next approach is carried out by looking for patterns of relationships between the public and political parties whether in terms of domination, pluralism, or integration. Relationship patterns according to J.W Coleman are interpreted as a form of interrelationship between community groups in social, political, and economic situations.

- a. Domination is a condition where political parties and the public compete and try to beat each other to become winners. In this situation, it becomes very realistic when an area or community that has become the mass base of a particular party then gets

determination from political opponents. The mapping of yesterday's election results shows that there are pockets of masses of certain candidates or political parties.

- b. Pluralism is a condition of society that already has a strong stance so that it is not easily influenced or influences other publics.
- c. Integration is a condition similar to the pluralist pattern, only then it has found concretization to jointly form a social, political and economic condition in equality.

This approach is very interesting to see in the tradition of the relationship between the public and political parties. The data obtained shows that the summary of the three indicators above shows that the public is in a medium perception with 43% and increases dramatically to 55% in high perception conditions. This finding can show that the pattern of relations between the public and political parties is very dynamic and there is potential for mutual "benefit". We cannot deny that in the tradition of direct election democracy there is a lot of money circulation at the grassroots. It is very possible that there is transactional politics based on financial benefits received by the public in their relationship with political parties and candidates.

In the pattern of relations between the public and political parties, they do not always face each other in the form of mutual domination. Although the public is often only the object of domination and interests of political parties, in some situations there is political integration when the party can provide maximum services and can be felt by the public directly. In Indonesia, especially on the island of Java, political mapping has occurred with a certain party's mass base. Solo and Central Java became the kitchen or mass base of PDIP, East Java or often known as "horseshoe" became the mass base of PKB. A form of political integration between the public and the party that is strengthened by ideological building.

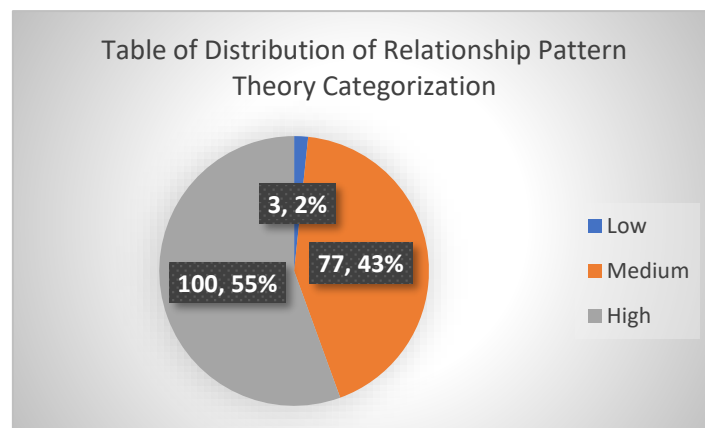


Figure 5. Table of Distribution of Relationship Pattern Theory Categorization

The position of public perception can also be seen from each province as the population of this research. East Java and West Java have the same level of medium perception which shows dominance at 83% while the province of Yogyakarta shows the highest public perception of political parties with 57%. Yogyakarta contributes to high public perception due to the large number of young voters represented by students who are in the enthusiastic phase of politics. They are involved in political discussions in the scientific and theoretical traditions that lead them to political optimism. while the six provinces have almost the same low perception in the range of 17% except Central Java which has a percentage of 33% with low perception. The condition of Central Java with the largest area and a high poverty rate of 3,831,440 people, makes it possible for disappointment in political parties.

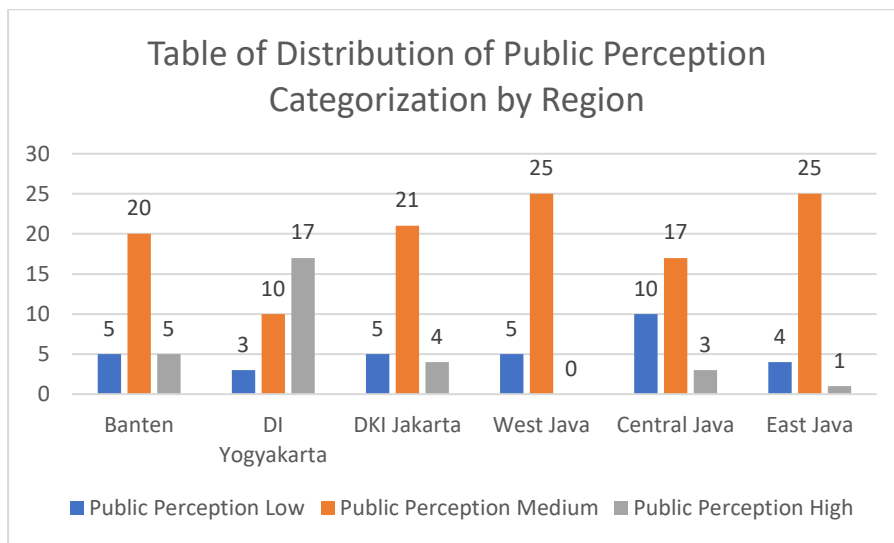


Figure 6. Table of Distribution of Public Perception Categorization by Region

Paradoxical conditions occur in Central Java, previously the low perception rate occupied the highest number in the public perception benchmark. However, when using affective, behavioral and cognitive indicators or ABC theory, it shows the highest number with a medium position equivalent to 87%. Above it has been mentioned that there is an attitude problem with voters in Indonesia that behind the disappointment in political parties there are transactional interests there. In Central Java, despite being one of the poorest provinces in Java, public support for political parties is very strong and fanatic. Even Ganjar Pranowo as the two-time Governor of Central Java is now officially nominated as a candidate for the 2024 Indonesian presidential election by the 2019 election-winning party, PDIP *Perjuangan*. While other provinces have medium perception figures in the range of 67% in the provinces of East Java, West Java, DKI Jakarta, and Banten.

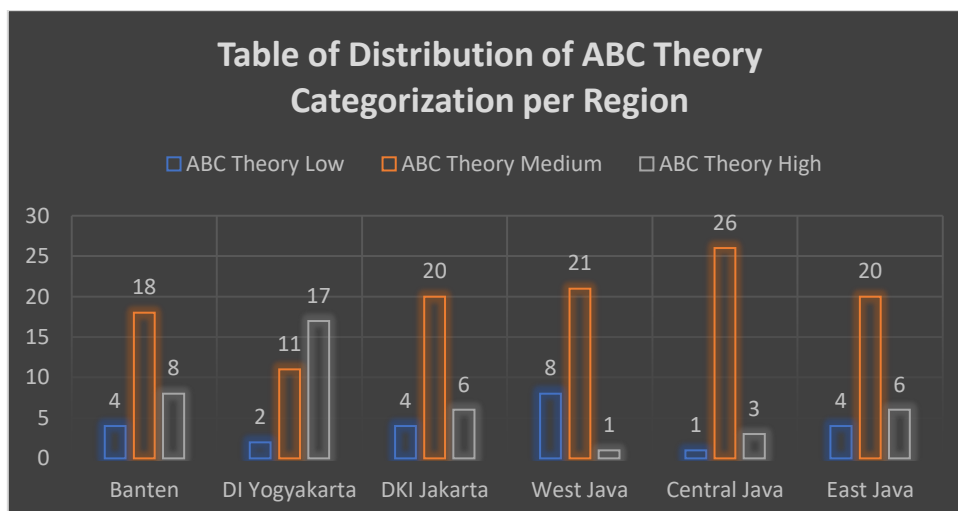


Figure 7. Table of Distribution of ABC Theory Categorization per Region

Factors Forming Public Perception

Public perception does not exist in a vacuum but is heavily influenced by external information factors, including news about political parties and politicians. The more negative news broadcast by the media and received by the public, it will affect public judgment or perception of the political party. In the questionnaire questions given to respondents, one of the findings is that there are many negative issues related to political parties and politicians that make people reluctant to join political parties.

From the data obtained, almost the entire public in the six provinces agreed and strongly agreed that negative issues related to political parties made them reluctant to become part of the party. In Banten Province 66% agreed and strongly agreed while the rest were in a neutral position. Yogyakarta public even 50% strongly agree and is corroborated by 20% agreeing with the statement. DKI Jakarta Province is dominantly neutral with 43% and 36% agreeing and strongly agreeing. While the East Java public responded to the above statement with 47% neutral and 33% agreed and strongly agreed. Overall, the dominant public agrees and strongly agrees that negative issues give a bad perception of political parties.

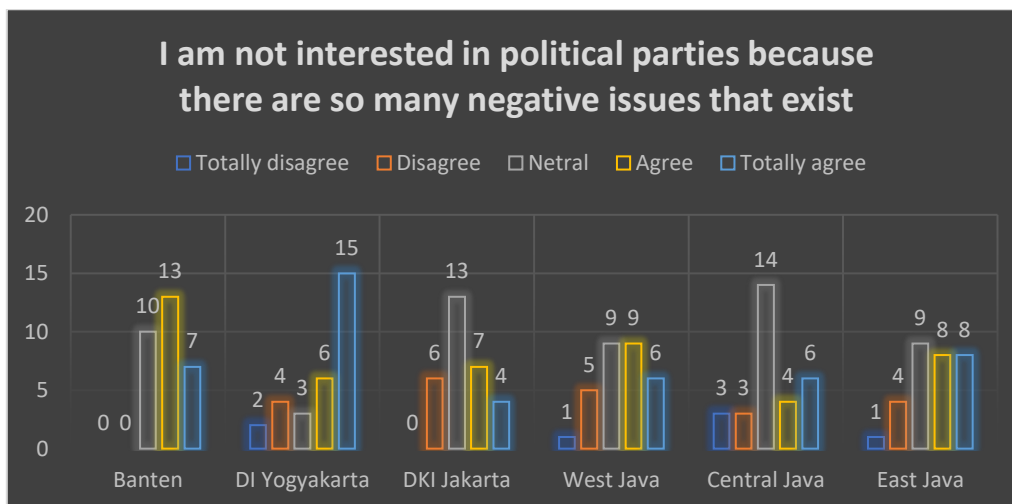


Figure 8. Negative issues and public perception

The public still does not fully believe that Islamic political parties can carry the image of Islam in national political contestation. Almost all provinces on the island of Java are dominantly neutral with a range of 33% to 53%. The neutral position can be assumed that political parties have not fully succeeded in presenting an Islamic image and helping Islamic interests in their political behavior. It is a paradox that in a country where Muslims are the majority, Islamic political parties are trapped in a stunted party because of the egoism of their elites. Islamic political parties, if accumulated from the four parties that pass the parliamentary threshold, namely PKB, PKS, PAN, and PPP, have an average accumulation rate of 30% in each election event. However, until today, each elite of Islamic political parties has not found a formulation so that they can unite.

The image of Islamic political parties is also at stake because of corruption cases that also befall Islamic party cadres. The durian cardboard case involving Muhaimin Iskandar a few years ago is still a topic of conversation to this day. The arrest of Romy Romahurmuzy in a corruption case while still active as chairman of PPP can also be a bad precedent for Islamic political parties. or the case that befall PKS president Luthfi Hasan in the cattle import case is certainly able to affect public perception on the image of Islamic political parties.

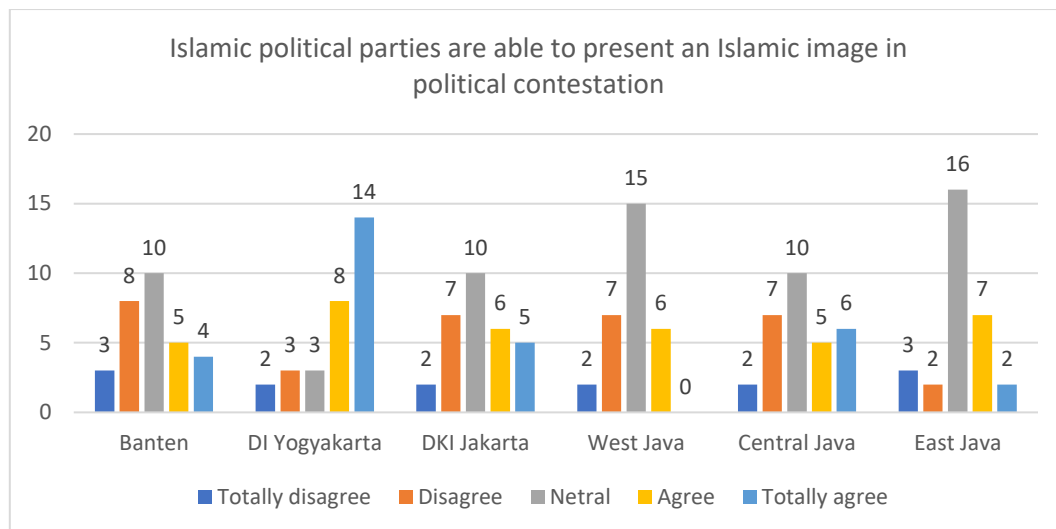


Figure 9. Islamic political parties are able to present an Islamic image in political contestation

Regarding whether Islamic political parties are able to encourage Islamic policies, public reactions are no different from perceptions of the performance of Islamic political parties. public dominance remains in a medium position with a range of 53% to 67%. The public who agrees with the above statement and believe in the ability of Islamic political parties to encourage Islamic policies are only in the range of 20% to 33%. This optimism occurs in Central Java and Banten and followed by DI Yogyakarta. The only province that has a high assessment is Yogyakarta, which believes that Islamic political parties are able to encourage Islamic policies with 40%.

The ability of Islamic political parties to encourage the birth of Islamic policies has indeed become a fierce debate at the elite level because they think that the state's involvement in the religious process is deep enough so that there is no need to strengthen it with Sharia local regulations. The effectiveness of sharia local regulations has been questioned in stimulating regional development, especially in the economic sector. However, the public with its cognitive ability is given the freedom to determine the assessment of Islamic political parties whether they have represented Islam in pushing policies or not.

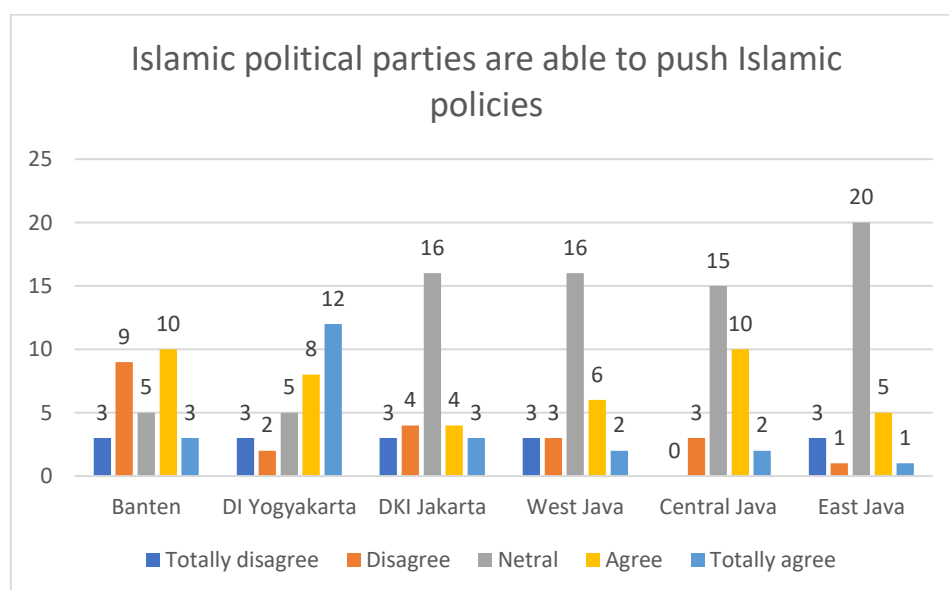


Figure 10. Islamic political parties can push Islamic policies

DISCUSSION

From the above findings, Islamic political parties need to make strategic changes in their approach to the public. The existence of Islamic parties that have existed after the reformation by passing the parliamentary threshold must be supported by building a positive image. The era of direct election democracy based on public perception of political parties and candidates must be realized and important breakthroughs must be made in ensuring public support. Support must not only be based on ideology like the new order era political parties but also support in a pragmatic form with a focus on issues that can accommodate public interests.

In the case of *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP), which in the last two elections has had difficulty penetrating the Parliamentary Threshold due to the depletion of ideological cadres and difficulties in capturing young votes that tend to be pragmatic. Or the phenomenon of PKS parties that tend to stagnate in the range of 7% to 8% because they only get the support of cadre militancy but fail to sell programs to the public or floating mass.

Therefore, Islamic political parties need competent political marketing accompanied by field data analysis in order to be able to formulate comprehensive strategies in embracing public support, both the support of ideological militant masses and pragmatic masses who vote because of the closeness of certain issues. Islamic political parties also need to be involved in populist issues related to social and economic issues intensely so as not to be trapped in partial issues by only focusing on religious policy issues.

CONCLUSION

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that public perceptions of Islamic parties ahead of the 2024 election contestation are in a medium position. This position can not only be interpreted as a positive position but also an early warning for political parties to improve because neutrality is sometimes the initial phase of disappointment. Islamic political parties need to be involved in various public issues that are more in favor of the people or the public rather than just standing behind power or government.

The position of Islamic political parties ahead of the 2024 elections is still in a safe category and has the potential to continue to get public attention and support. It's just that they need to work harder to win the election like the nationalist parties do. From the data above, it shows that negative public sentiment does not appear significantly, but positive assessments are also at a low point, so if calculated in voting behavior, the public tends to be a floating mass for Islamic political parties that have the potential to change course if there is a more promising nationalist party.

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