

ISLAMIC POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND LEADERSHIP ORIENTATION AMONG MUSLIM UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR DA'WAH GOVERNANCE AND FAITH-BASED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze political consciousness and leadership orientation among Muslim university students in understanding the relationship between Islam, politics, leadership, and governance. The study is motivated by increasing debates surrounding religious identity, the rise of political Islam, and changing patterns of civic engagement among young Muslims within higher education settings. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a survey design to obtain an in-depth understanding of students' political constructions based on their religious interpretations. Data were collected through online questionnaires distributed to 44 Muslim students at Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) selected using purposive sampling techniques. Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis involving coding, categorization, and interpretation guided by a theoretical framework. The findings reveal that traditional-integralistic orientation remains dominant in students' political understanding; however, moderate tendencies also emerged, emphasizing the importance of adapting Islamic values to contemporary social contexts. The study also identifies a contradiction between students' beliefs regarding Islam as a comprehensive system and their support for institutional flexibility and reinterpretation of Islamic political concepts. The study is limited by the relatively small number of respondents and the focus on a single university setting. Practically, the findings provide implications for da'wah management, leadership education, and strengthening faith-based civic engagement. The primary contribution of this research is the development of the Adaptive Islamic Political Consciousness Theory (AIPCT), which explains the negotiation process between religious identity and political orientation among Muslim university students within contemporary social contexts.

Keywords: political consciousness, religious identity, leadership orientation, civic engagement, da'wah management

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Political consciousness among Muslim university students has become increasingly important amid the rise of religious identity, civic participation, and debates surrounding Islam

and governance in contemporary society. Existing studies primarily focus on political Islam and radicalism, while limited attention has been given to how students interpret Islamic political values and leadership orientation in everyday civic contexts. This study fills that gap by examining Muslim students' perspectives on religion, state, and leadership. The findings contribute to understanding how Islamic values shape civic engagement and provide insights for developing more inclusive and constructive da'wah and leadership strategies in higher education settings.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing visibility of religious identity in public life has significantly influenced political consciousness among Muslim youth in contemporary societies. Political awareness among university students is no longer confined to formal political participation, but increasingly intersects with religious values, ideological orientation, civic engagement, and leadership perspectives. In many Muslim communities, interpretations of Islamic teachings shape perceptions regarding governance, political authority, leadership legitimacy, and state-religion relations. Consequently, discussions concerning political Islam, civic engagement, and religious identity have become increasingly relevant within higher education contexts.

Previous studies have demonstrated that Islamic political orientation is often influenced by broader socio-political transformations, including globalization, identity politics, democratization, and the rise of religious movements. Hassan (2006) argued that the emergence of religious conservatism and radicalism among Muslim societies is closely related to experiences of socio-political marginalization, economic inequality, and ideological contestation. Similarly, Nashir (2013) explained that Islamic revivalism frequently emerges from the belief that Islam constitutes a comprehensive way of life (*din wa daulah*) encompassing social, cultural, and political dimensions. In this context, religion is not merely understood as a private spiritual matter, but also as a framework influencing public ethics and political orientation.

Theoretical discussions concerning Islam and politics have produced diverse perspectives. Classical Muslim scholars such as Al-Mawardi and Al-Ghazali emphasized the interdependent relationship between religion and political authority, arguing that governance plays an important role in maintaining social order and religious values. Contemporary scholars such as Bassam Tibi, however, distinguish between Islam as a religion and Islamism as a political ideology, arguing that religious doctrines may be transformed into instruments of political mobilization and identity construction. Meanwhile, civic engagement theory emphasizes that political awareness among youth is shaped not only by ideology but also by participation, democratic values, social interaction, and educational experience. These perspectives indicate that political consciousness among Muslim students should be understood through multidimensional approaches integrating religious interpretation, civic orientation, and leadership understanding.

Despite extensive discussions regarding political Islam and religious ideology, several limitations remain in previous studies. First, most existing research focuses on macro-level analyses of Islamic movements, ideological contestation, and radical organizations rather than examining political consciousness at the individual level among university students. Second, many studies emphasize theological and ideological debates while paying limited attention to how Muslim students interpret political values within educational environments. Third,

empirical studies in Indonesian higher education contexts remain relatively limited, particularly regarding the relationship between Islamic understanding, civic engagement, and leadership orientation among Muslim youth. As a result, there is still insufficient empirical evidence explaining how religious interpretations shape students' political perspectives and civic attitudes in contemporary university settings.

This study seeks to address these limitations by analyzing political consciousness and leadership orientation among Muslim university students in Indonesia. The study specifically examines students' understanding of Islamic teachings related to religion-state relations, governance, leadership systems, and civic responsibility. Drawing upon Islamic political thought and civic engagement perspectives, this research aims to explore how religious interpretations influence students' political understanding and leadership orientation within contemporary higher education environments. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: *How do Muslim university students interpret political concepts within Islamic teachings, and how do these interpretations shape their leadership orientation and civic engagement?*

The novelty of this study lies in three main aspects. First, unlike previous studies that primarily focus on ideological movements or theological discourse, this research examines political consciousness at the individual level among Muslim university students. Second, the study integrates Islamic political thought with civic engagement and leadership orientation perspectives, providing a more comprehensive analytical framework for understanding youth political awareness. Third, this research contributes empirical evidence from Indonesian higher education contexts, which remain underrepresented in existing scholarship concerning religion and political consciousness. Theoretically, the study contributes to discussions on the relationship between religious interpretation and civic-political orientation among Muslim youth. Practically, the findings are expected to provide insights for universities and educational institutions in developing democratic, inclusive, and critically engaged student leadership within multicultural societies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

Political consciousness among Muslim university students represents a multidimensional construct involving religious interpretation, political awareness, ideological orientation, and perceptions of governance. In contemporary scholarship, political consciousness refers to individuals' awareness of social structures, political realities, and ideological values that shape attitudes and behavior toward public affairs. In Muslim societies, political consciousness frequently intersects with religious identity because Islamic teachings are often interpreted not only as theological guidance but also as a framework regulating social and political life. Such interpretations create varying orientations concerning leadership, governance, and religion-state relations.

The grand theory employed in this study is Social Identity Theory. Social Identity Theory explains that individuals construct social identities through membership within groups, communities, and ideological affiliations. Religious identity functions as a salient source of social categorization, influencing values, attitudes, and behavioral orientations. Through this framework, Muslim students may develop political attitudes according to their interpretations of

Islam and their affiliations with educational or religious communities. Strong identification with particular religious narratives potentially shapes perceptions concerning leadership legitimacy, political authority, and governance structures.

The theoretical relevance of Social Identity Theory becomes particularly significant within discussions concerning Islamic political consciousness. According to the theory, individuals continuously negotiate social meaning and group boundaries through identity construction processes. Within Muslim communities, religious narratives emphasizing Islam as a comprehensive system (*din wa daulah*) often encourage broader interpretations regarding political participation and governance. The perspective of Islamic integralism argues that Islam provides guidance for all aspects of life, including political organization and state administration. Thinkers such as Al-Mawardi conceptualized governance as an institutional continuation of prophetic functions responsible for preserving religion and regulating worldly affairs. Similarly, Al-Ghazali viewed political authority as an essential mechanism for maintaining religious and social order.

However, scholarship concerning Islam and politics remains characterized by substantial theoretical debates. Revivalist scholars argue that religion and governance are organically interconnected and that Islamic law should regulate public institutions. In contrast, reformist perspectives argue that religion provides ethical principles rather than fixed political structures. According to Bassam Tibi, contemporary Islamism transforms religious values into political identity and ideological instruments for social mobilization. Meanwhile, reformist scholars such as Jamal al-Banna argue that the Qur'an does not explicitly prescribe a detailed political system and instead prioritizes moral and ethical dimensions. These contrasting interpretations demonstrate that political consciousness among Muslim students may not be uniform but instead reflects diverse religious understandings.

Leadership orientation constitutes another important concept in this study. Leadership orientation refers to individual preferences regarding authority structures, leadership legitimacy, and political governance systems. Previous scholarship suggests that leadership perceptions among young adults are influenced by ideological beliefs, educational environments, and religious exposure. Students who internalize strong religious identities may perceive leadership not solely as administrative authority but also as moral representation and religious responsibility. Therefore, religious interpretations potentially shape both political consciousness and leadership orientation simultaneously.

To ensure conceptual clarity, this study conceptualizes four primary dimensions adapted from the empirical structure identified in the original research data: (1) perceptions regarding the comprehensiveness of Islam, (2) religion-state relations, (3) Islamic law implementation, and (4) leadership and governance orientation. These dimensions collectively form a broader construct explaining how religious interpretation contributes to political awareness and leadership perspectives among Muslim university students.

Table 1.
Conceptual Definition of Main Constructs

Variable	Definition	Main Dimensions	Key References
Political Consciousness	Awareness and interpretation of political realities shaped by values and identities	Political awareness, ideological orientation, civic values	Freire; Tajfel & Turner

Variable	Definition	Main Dimensions	Key References
Religious Interpretation	Individual understanding of Islamic teachings regarding social and political life	Comprehensive Islam, religious ideology	Nashir; Tibi
Religion–State Relations	Perceptions concerning connections between religion and governance	State legitimacy, political institutions	Al-Mawardi; Al-Ghazali
Leadership Orientation	Individual attitudes toward authority and governance systems	Political leadership, legitimacy, authority	Islamic political theory

Source: Developed by authors.

Research Proposition

Previous international studies have demonstrated that religious identity significantly influences political attitudes and civic participation among young populations. Social Identity Theory suggests that stronger group identification increases ideological consistency and influences collective behavior. Within Muslim communities, religious identity frequently becomes an important source of political orientation. Existing empirical studies indicate that students with stronger religious engagement often exhibit more integrated perspectives concerning politics and governance.

Nevertheless, findings from prior studies remain inconsistent. Some research suggests that religious commitment increases support for political participation and democratic values. Conversely, other studies argue that stronger religious attachment may encourage exclusivist political orientations and ideological rigidity. The divergence of these findings indicates that political attitudes among Muslim youth are context-dependent and shaped by educational, organizational, and social environments.

Furthermore, studies concerning Islamic political thought primarily focus on macro-level discussions such as Islamic movements, radical organizations, and political ideology. Limited research examines how Muslim university students construct political understanding through everyday educational experiences and religious interpretation processes. Therefore, political consciousness should be understood not merely as ideological positioning but also as a product of interaction between religious identity and sociocultural environments.

Since this study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, propositions rather than formal hypotheses are developed:

P1: Students with stronger perceptions of Islam as a comprehensive system tend to demonstrate stronger political consciousness.

P2: Interpretations regarding religion-state relations influence leadership orientation among Muslim students.

P3: Support for Islamic law implementation contributes to students' perceptions regarding political authority and governance.

P4: Religious interpretation functions as an important mechanism shaping civic engagement and political identity formation among Muslim university students.

These propositions are derived from theoretical arguments and previous empirical findings suggesting that religious identity contributes significantly to political orientation and leadership perception.

Table 2.
Research Proposition Development

Proposition	Theoretical Basis	Expected Relationship
P1	Social Identity Theory	Religious interpretation strengthens political consciousness
P2	Islamic Political Theory	Religion-state understanding shapes leadership orientation
P3	Revivalist Perspective	Syariah perception influences political authority
P4	Civic Identity Perspective	Religious identity affects civic engagement

Source: Developed by authors.

Research Model

This study proposes a conceptual model explaining the relationship between religious interpretation, political consciousness, and leadership orientation among Muslim university students. Religious interpretation acts as a foundational dimension shaping how individuals understand social and political realities. Students' understanding regarding Islam as a comprehensive system, perceptions toward religion-state relations, and attitudes toward Islamic law implementation collectively influence political consciousness formation. Political consciousness subsequently shapes leadership orientation and broader civic engagement perspectives.

The conceptual structure integrates Social Identity Theory with Islamic political thought to explain how religious identity functions as an interpretive framework influencing political understanding. The model establishes coherence among theoretical assumptions, research objectives, propositions, and empirical investigation. Consequently, this conceptual framework provides a systematic foundation for subsequent methodological and analytical procedures.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive survey design to examine political consciousness and leadership orientation among Muslim university students by exploring their interpretations, perceptions, and meaning-making processes regarding Islamic teachings on politics, governance, and leadership. A qualitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because political consciousness is understood as a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by religious interpretation, ideological orientation, and educational experiences. Unlike quantitative approaches that emphasize causal relationships, this approach focuses on understanding social realities from participants' perspectives within their natural contexts. To enrich interpretive depth while maintaining systematic data collection, the study integrated a survey strategy within qualitative inquiry, enabling the capture of broad variations in students' political understanding without neglecting contextual meaning and subjective experiences. This methodological approach is further supported by Social Identity Theory, which posits that social and religious identities are formed through ongoing interaction and contextual interpretation. Therefore, the selected design provided an appropriate framework for investigating how religious identity contributes to the development of political consciousness and leadership orientation among Muslim students.

The study was conducted at Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ), a public higher education institution characterized by sociocultural diversity and heterogeneous student

backgrounds, making it a relevant setting for examining political consciousness and religious interpretation among Muslim students. Universities serve as important spaces for identity formation and ideological negotiation, particularly among young adults exposed to various political, social, and religious discourses. The target population consisted of Muslim undergraduate students, and participants were selected using purposive sampling to identify information-rich individuals capable of providing relevant insights into the phenomenon under investigation. This sampling approach is commonly employed in qualitative research because it allows researchers to select participants with experiences and characteristics aligned with the research objectives. A total of 44 Muslim students participated in the study, representing different academic disciplines and educational backgrounds, including public schools, Islamic schools, and pesantren institutions. Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 22 years and also reflected diverse organizational experiences, with several actively involved in religious and student organizations both within and outside the university environment. Such diversity was intentionally maintained to enhance contextual variation and strengthen analytical depth, as qualitative research prioritizes contextual understanding and transferability rather than statistical representativeness. Therefore, the selected participants were expected to provide comprehensive perspectives regarding political understanding and religious interpretation among Muslim university students.

Data collection was conducted using structured online questionnaires distributed over a period of approximately one month. The use of online survey instruments enabled wider participation and provided respondents with flexibility to complete the questionnaire within their own environments. The instrument contained a combination of closed-ended and interpretive statements aimed at exploring students' perceptions across four analytical dimensions: perceptions of Islam as a comprehensive system, religion–state relations, implementation of Islamic law, and leadership and governance orientation. These dimensions were developed based on Islamic political scholarship and conceptual themes identified from previous theoretical discussions. To improve accessibility and increase response rates, questionnaire links were disseminated through social media platforms and student communication networks. Participation was voluntary, and respondents completed the questionnaire anonymously to reduce social desirability bias and encourage more authentic responses, particularly regarding sensitive religious and political issues. In addition, document analysis was employed by reviewing Islamic political literature, theoretical texts, and previous studies related to political Islam, leadership, and religious consciousness. The integration of multiple data sources facilitated methodological triangulation and enhanced the credibility and consistency of interpretation.

The study operationalized political consciousness and leadership orientation through four conceptual dimensions adapted from Islamic political theory and empirical findings from previous studies: comprehensiveness of Islam, religion–state relations, Islamic law implementation, and leadership orientation. These dimensions were treated as reflective indicators because participants' responses were assumed to represent broader latent understandings of political consciousness. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) was utilized to systematically capture respondents' perceptions and attitudes. The use of the Likert scale allowed greater comparability of responses while accommodating subjective interpretations and individual attitudes. Measurement items were

adapted and reconstructed from discussions in Islamic political thought and religious identity literature, particularly from scholarship addressing Islamic revivalism, Islamism, and religion–state relations. To ensure content validity and strengthen conceptual rigor, all questionnaire items underwent a conceptual review process to ensure consistency between theoretical constructs and empirical indicators, thereby maintaining alignment with international academic standards.

Table 3.
Operational Definition of Variables

Variable	Dimension	Indicator	Scale
Political Consciousness	Comprehensiveness of Islam	Islam as a complete system of life	Likert (1–5)
Political Consciousness	Religion–State Relations	Perceptions of Islam and governance	Likert (1–5)
Political Consciousness	Syariah Orientation	State responsibility toward Islamic law	Likert (1–5)
Leadership Orientation	Political Leadership	Leadership legitimacy and authority	Likert (1–5)

Source: Developed by authors.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic content analysis to identify patterns, categories, and interpretive meanings emerging from respondents’ perspectives regarding political consciousness and leadership orientation. The analytical process followed a systematic procedure beginning with organizing and compiling questionnaire responses into manageable analytical units, followed by an initial coding stage to identify recurring concepts and dominant ideas. Subsequently, similar codes were categorized into broader themes aligned with the study dimensions and later interpreted through relevant theoretical frameworks and previous scholarly findings. To strengthen analytical rigor, the study integrated both deductive and inductive coding approaches. Deductive coding utilized predefined categories derived from Social Identity Theory and Islamic political scholarship, while inductive coding enabled unexpected themes and contextual insights to emerge directly from participants’ responses. Combining these two approaches enhanced interpretive richness and minimized theoretical bias. Furthermore, several credibility procedures commonly applied in qualitative research including data triangulation, theoretical comparison, and iterative interpretation were employed to strengthen trustworthiness and maintain analytical transparency. Interpretation was continuously grounded in empirical evidence to ensure consistency between findings and analysis, thereby enhancing the credibility, transferability, and dependability of the study in accordance with international academic standards.

RESULT

The findings are organized into several analytical sections to systematically explain respondents’ demographic profiles, patterns of political consciousness, and leadership orientation among Muslim university students. Consistent with the research objectives, the analysis focuses on four main dimensions: comprehensiveness of Islam, religion–state relations, Islamic law implementation, and leadership orientation. Findings are presented through descriptive statistics and supported by interpretive narratives to maintain coherence between empirical evidence and broader analytical understanding.

Respondent Profile

This study involved 44 Muslim university students from various educational and organizational backgrounds. Respondents represented diverse demographic characteristics expected to contribute to variations in political and religious perspectives. The participants consisted of both male and female students aged between 18 and 22 years. Academic backgrounds also varied, including students enrolled in religious and non-religious study programs. In addition, respondents differed in previous educational experiences, including general secondary schools, Islamic schools, and pesantren education.

Table 4.
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	30	68.2%
	Female	14	31.8%
Age	18–20	26	59.1%
	21–22	18	40.9%
Educational Background	Public School	34	77.3%
	Madrasah	8	18.2%
	Pesantren	2	4.5%
Academic Program	General disciplines	30	68.2%
	Islamic studies	14	31.8%
Organizational Participation	Religious organizations	14	31.8%
	Non-religious organizations	30	68.2%

Source: Processed research data.

The respondent profile demonstrates substantial diversity in educational and organizational exposure. Such diversity suggests the possibility of differing political interpretations and religious orientations among participants.

Distribution of Political Understanding Typology

Analysis of respondents' answers revealed three dominant typologies of political understanding: traditional-integralistic (revivalist), reformist-moderate, and reformist-secular. Results indicate that traditional-integralistic orientation constituted the largest proportion of political understanding among respondents. Moderate orientations also represented a substantial portion, while reformist-secular perspectives appeared relatively limited.

Table 5.
Typology of Political Consciousness

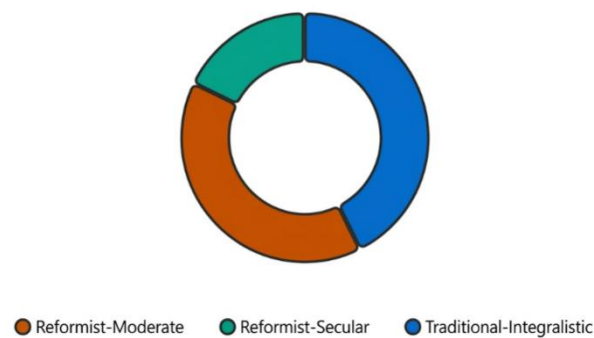
Typology	Frequency	Percentage
Traditional–Integralistic (Revivalist)	382	42.87%
Reformist–Moderate	353	39.62%

Typology	Frequency	Percentage
Reformist–Secular	156	17.51%

Source: Processed research data.

To facilitate interpretation, the proportion of political understanding categories is illustrated below:

Figure 1.
Political Consciousness Typology
Distribution of respondents based on political orientation



The chart indicates that revivalist orientations remain dominant among respondents. However, the relatively balanced proportion between revivalist and moderate categories suggests ideological diversity rather than political homogeneity among Muslim students.

Findings by Research Dimensions

The first dimension examined respondents' perceptions regarding Islam as a comprehensive framework regulating all aspects of life, including political and governmental systems. Findings indicate that respondents generally perceived Islam beyond personal religiosity and ritual obligations. Many participants agreed that Islamic teachings extend into broader domains, including social organization and political life.

Table 6.
Perceptions toward the Comprehensiveness of Islam

Statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Islam regulates religion and state simultaneously	47.7	52.3
Islam governs all dimensions including politics	95.5	4.5
Islam only regulates worship and morality	36.7	63.3
Islamic concepts are sufficiently comprehensive	56.8	43.2

Source: Processed research data.

The findings suggest that respondents generally understood Islam as a comprehensive

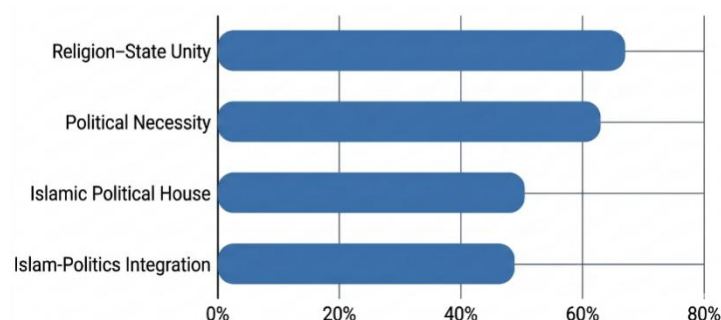
system extending beyond spiritual domains. This dimension examined respondents' understanding concerning relationships between religious teachings and political institutions.

Table 7.
Perceptions regarding Religion–State Relations

Statement	Agree (%)
Islam and politics cannot be separated	47.7
Religion and state represent interconnected entities	65.9
Islam provides a complete state system	43.2
Muslims require political institutions representing Islam	50.0
Political institutions are religious necessities	61.4
Islam provides moral principles for governance	70.5

Source: Processed research data

Figure 2.
Religion–State Orientation among Respondents
Percentage of agreement toward religion-state relationship dimensions



The findings reveal that most respondents viewed religion and governance as interconnected. Nevertheless, responses also indicate variations in interpretations regarding how such relationships should be institutionally implemented. This dimension explored attitudes toward formal implementation of Islamic law within state institutions.

Table 8.
Shariah Implementation Orientation

Statement	Agree (%)
State is necessary to implement Islamic law	54.5
Syariah should be formally institutionalized	65.9
Salaf methodology should guide governance	31.8
State systems should adapt to contemporary contexts	72.7
Classical interpretations require contextual adaptation	63.6

Source: Processed research data.

Results indicate that respondents generally supported the role of the state in facilitating religious values. However, a larger proportion also supported adaptation according to contemporary societal contexts, indicating flexible rather than rigid orientations. Leadership perceptions constituted the final analytical dimension. Findings demonstrate that students generally viewed leadership as involving both moral and political dimensions. Leadership was not solely interpreted as administrative authority but also as representation of religious values and social responsibility.

Table 9.
Summary of Leadership Orientation Patterns

Orientation	Dominant Pattern
Leadership legitimacy	Religious and moral authority
Governance preference	Integrated ethical governance
Political participation	Moderate civic involvement
Leadership role	Social and religious representation

Source: Developed by authors.

The findings demonstrate that respondents possessed multidimensional political understandings shaped by educational background, religious interpretation, and organizational experiences. Although revivalist perspectives remained dominant, evidence also suggests the emergence of moderate orientations that accommodate contextual adaptation and civic engagement. These patterns provide important insights into contemporary political consciousness among Muslim university students and establish a foundation for subsequent interpretive discussion.

DISCUSSION

Political Consciousness as a Dynamic and Negotiated Identity

The findings of this study demonstrate that political consciousness among Muslim university students is dynamic, plural, and continuously negotiated through the interaction between religious identity, civic values, and socio-political experiences. Muslim students do not represent a homogeneous political group; rather, their political orientation is shaped by multiple social identities, including religion, nationalism, educational background, and social environment. This finding supports previous studies arguing that Muslim youth identities are fluid and context-dependent rather than fixed ideological categories (Dunne et al., 2020; Dunne & Crossouard, 2020; Younis & Hassan, 2018). In the Indonesian context, the emergence of various orientations such as politically tolerant, non-political religious, and politically religious groups further confirms that religious commitment does not automatically produce uniform political attitudes (Kusumawati et al., 2023). Consequently, political consciousness among Muslim students should be understood as a process of identity negotiation shaped by both religious interpretation and civic engagement within democratic society.

This study also reveals that higher education institutions play an important role in constructing students' political awareness and leadership orientation. Universities function not

only as academic spaces but also as arenas where students reinterpret religious teachings, leadership values, and democratic participation. The findings align with previous studies showing that Islamic educational environments contribute to the formation of diverse orientations among Muslim youth, ranging from puritan and conservative tendencies to moderate and liberal perspectives (Taja et al., 2024; Mustofa et al., 2023). From the perspective of civic engagement theory, this indicates that political understanding is socially constructed through interaction, discussion, and institutional experience rather than merely inherited through doctrinal transmission. The findings further suggest that students tend to interpret Islam contextually, viewing religion not only as a theological system but also as an ethical framework for justice, leadership, and social responsibility within multicultural societies.

In addition, the findings indicate that contemporary socio-political contexts, including identity politics, media polarization, and public religious contestation, significantly influence students' political perceptions. However, students do not passively adopt ideological narratives; instead, they actively reinterpret political and religious discourses according to their lived experiences and educational exposure. This finding is consistent with studies emphasizing that Muslim youth possess agency in negotiating political identity within changing democratic contexts (Baysu & Phalet, 2017; Mossière, 2024; Ubaidillah & Gürel, 2025). Therefore, this study challenges essentialist assumptions that Islamic identity necessarily corresponds to a singular political orientation or ideological rigidity. Rather, political consciousness among Muslim university students reflects a multidimensional process shaped by religious values, civic participation, educational experience, and broader socio-political dynamics.

Contradictory Patterns in Understanding Islam as a Comprehensive System

The findings of this study indicate that Muslim university students tend to understand Islam simultaneously as a comprehensive religious framework and as a contextual ethical system adaptable to contemporary democratic realities. This pattern reflects what previous studies describe as the coexistence between revivalist aspirations and contextual reinterpretation within contemporary Muslim political thought (Aziz, 2023; Fuadi, 2024; Diouane et al., 2025). Many respondents perceived Islamic teachings as encompassing governance, justice, leadership, and social order, which aligns with the classical conception of *din wa daulah* emphasizing the inseparability of religion and public life (Ahmad, 2021; Sajjadi, 2024; Ullah, 2024). However, the findings also reveal that students do not interpret these principles rigidly. Instead, they demonstrate openness toward contextual adaptation, democratic participation, and pluralistic coexistence, suggesting that Islamic political consciousness among youth is increasingly shaped by negotiation between normative religious ideals and contemporary socio-political realities.

This study further demonstrates that political awareness among Muslim students is strongly influenced by educational experience and institutional environments. Universities function not merely as sites of religious transmission, but as spaces where students critically reinterpret political authority, citizenship, and leadership ethics. Such findings are consistent with previous research arguing that contemporary Muslim youth actively reconstruct religious meaning through interaction with civic values, higher education, and public discourse (Setiawan et al., 2025; Sahari et al., 2025). In this context, political consciousness is not formed solely through doctrinal acceptance but through dialogical processes involving social experience, organizational participation, and intellectual exposure. This explains why some students

simultaneously support Islamic moral values while also accepting democratic systems and multicultural citizenship. The findings therefore support the argument that Muslim youth political identity should be understood as multilayered and adaptive rather than ideologically monolithic.

Another important finding concerns the emergence of overlapping political and religious identities among Muslim students. The study reveals that students frequently combine strong religious commitment with support for nationalism, democracy, and civic participation. This finding resonates with studies on Indonesian Muslim youth showing the existence of “dual orientation,” in which students support Islamic values in public life while also recognizing pluralistic state systems such as Pancasila as legitimate political frameworks (Ahmad, 2021). Similarly, Mossière (2024) and Mukhtar (2023) argue that contemporary Muslim youth increasingly develop hybrid forms of “political spirituality” that blur rigid distinctions between conservative and moderate identities. This indicates that political consciousness among Muslim students is not adequately explained through binary categories such as secular versus religious or moderate versus revivalist. Rather, students selectively reinterpret Islamic teachings according to local realities, global political discourse, and personal educational experiences.

Adaptive Islamic Political Consciousness among Muslim University Students

The findings of this study demonstrate that political consciousness among Muslim university students is characterized by a dynamic negotiation between religious commitment, civic values, and contemporary socio-political realities. Although many participants perceive Islam as a comprehensive framework encompassing moral, social, and political dimensions, they simultaneously reject rigid formalization of classical Islamic state models such as the caliphate. This finding supports recent scholarship arguing that contemporary Muslim youth tend to position Islam as a source of ethical guidance in public life without necessarily advocating for a theocratic political system (Azeh et al., 2023; Sidaryanti et al., 2025). The coexistence of strong religiosity and acceptance of democratic pluralism indicates that Muslim political consciousness among university students is increasingly adaptive rather than doctrinally deterministic. In this regard, the findings reinforce arguments suggesting that religion–state relations in Muslim societies are not binary oppositions between secularism and Islamism, but rather operate within flexible and negotiated configurations shaped by local historical and institutional contexts (Zahir, 2023; Munhanif & Ihsan, 2023).

The results further reveal that higher education institutions function as critical arenas for the reconstruction of political and religious understanding among Muslim youth. Students do not merely inherit political orientations through religious doctrine; instead, they actively reinterpret Islamic teachings through organizational participation, social interaction, digital exposure, and academic discourse. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing that Muslim youth identities are socially constructed and contextually negotiated within educational and civic environments (Khotimah et al., 2025; Mattes et al., 2025). In particular, the data indicate that students tend to combine religious morality with democratic participation and civic responsibility, suggesting the emergence of what may be described as adaptive Islamic political consciousness. Such consciousness allows students to maintain strong Islamic identity while simultaneously engaging with pluralistic state systems and democratic norms. The findings

therefore challenge essentialist assumptions that religious commitment among Muslim youth necessarily leads to ideological rigidity or anti-democratic orientation.

Table 10.
Comparative Analysis of Findings and Previous Studies

Main Findings of This Study	Supporting Previous Studies	Analytical Interpretation
Muslim students support Islamic values in public life but reject rigid theocratic models	Azeh et al. (2023); Sidaryanti et al. (2025)	Indicates adaptive religion–state orientation rather than formalistic Islamism
Political consciousness is shaped through educational and social interaction	Khotimah et al. (2025); Mattes et al. (2025)	Demonstrates that political identity is socially constructed and context-dependent
Religious and national identities coexist simultaneously	McKown (2023); Munhanif & Ihsan (2023)	Reflects hybrid and multilayered civic-religious identity formation
Muslim youth reinterpret Islamic political values contextually	Comer & Jacobi (2021); Zahir (2023)	Supports the concept of adaptive Islamic political consciousness
Universities play a role in promoting democratic and inclusive civic awareness	Sahari et al. (2025); Sya'bani (2025)	Highlights the importance of transformative Islamic education in democratic societies

Leadership Orientation and Faith-Based Civic Engagement

The findings reveal that Muslim university students interpret leadership not only as institutional authority but also as moral responsibility, ethical representation, and social stewardship. Leadership legitimacy is therefore constructed through the ability to maintain justice, public welfare, and collective harmony rather than merely through formal political power. This perspective reflects classical Islamic political thought that conceptualizes leadership as *amanah* (trust) and moral accountability toward society. However, unlike classical hierarchical models, contemporary Muslim students tend to prefer adaptive and participatory leadership approaches compatible with democratic and pluralistic contexts. This tendency indicates that Muslim youth increasingly reinterpret Islamic political values through contextual negotiation processes rather than through rigid ideological orientations (Khotimah et al., 2025; Mattes et al., 2025; Zahir, 2023). As a result, leadership orientation among Muslim students appears to emphasize ethical credibility, inclusiveness, and social responsibility over symbolic formalism or exclusive religious authority.

The study also demonstrates the emergence of faith-based civic engagement in which political participation is understood as part of religious morality and civic ethics. Students tend to associate political engagement with social contribution, collective welfare, and responsibility toward the broader community rather than solely with formal political institutions or state-centered authority. This finding supports previous studies showing that Muslim youth increasingly combine Islamic commitment with democratic participation and civic consciousness (Munhanif & Ihsan, 2023; Sahari et al., 2025). In this context, Islamic values function primarily as ethical guidance for public engagement and leadership practices rather than as ideological instruments for formalizing religious political systems. Consequently,

Muslim students' political consciousness reflects an adaptive orientation prioritizing justice, morality, and inclusive participation within multicultural democratic societies.

From the perspective of da'wah studies, these findings indicate a transformation in the role of da'wah within contemporary university environments. Da'wah is increasingly interpreted not merely as religious transmission but as a process of ethical empowerment, civic education, and social engagement. Muslim students tend to position da'wah activities as spaces for developing moral leadership, dialogical communication, and civic responsibility within democratic society. This finding suggests that contemporary campus da'wah movements increasingly emphasize persuasive, contextual, and socially oriented approaches rather than ideological mobilization. Therefore, universities and da'wah institutions should strengthen programs focusing on civic literacy, ethical leadership, and inclusive religious dialogue in order to encourage constructive political participation among Muslim youth while simultaneously preventing exclusivist and polarizing interpretations of religion.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that political consciousness among Muslim university students is characterized by dynamic and multidimensional patterns rather than rigid ideological categories. The findings reveal that traditional–integralistic orientations remain dominant; however, moderate and adaptive perspectives also emerged significantly among respondents. Students generally viewed Islam as a comprehensive framework extending beyond personal religiosity into broader social and political domains. Nevertheless, the findings also revealed an important contradiction: while respondents supported the interconnectedness of religion and governance, they simultaneously expressed support for contextual adaptation and reinterpretation of political and religious concepts according to contemporary realities. These findings suggest that political understanding among Muslim students reflects an ongoing negotiation between religious commitment and sociocultural context. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of the Adaptive Islamic Political Consciousness Theory (AIPCT), which explains how political awareness among Muslim youth evolves through interactions among religious identity, contextual negotiation, and institutional flexibility.

The study also generates important practical implications for higher education institutions and da'wah organizations by highlighting the need for leadership and civic development programs that promote critical thinking, contextual religious interpretation, and constructive political engagement. Rather than reinforcing binary distinctions between conservative and progressive orientations, educational institutions should facilitate inclusive spaces encouraging dialogical understanding and adaptive leadership formation. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study relied on a relatively small sample drawn from a single university context, thereby limiting broader transferability of findings. In addition, the use of self-reported questionnaire data may not fully capture the complexity of students' political experiences and ideological negotiations. Future studies are encouraged to employ larger comparative samples, mixed-method approaches, and cross-cultural contexts to further examine political consciousness and religious identity formation among Muslim youth populations.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, A.H., H. and M.Z.; methodology, A.H. and H.; software, M.Z.; validation, A.H., H. and M.Z.; formal analysis, A.H. and M.Z.; investigation, A.H. and H.; resources, A.H. and H.; data curation, M.Z.; writing original draft preparation, A.H. and H.; writing review and editing, A.H., H. and M.Z.; visualization, M.Z.; supervision, A.H.; project administration, A.H. and H.; funding acquisition, A.H. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Not applicable. This study did not involve human participants, patients, or the collection of identifiable personal data requiring informed consent.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used OpenAI's ChatGPT to assist with language editing, grammatical improvement, and refinement of the manuscript's academic writing. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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