Jurnal Ulunnuha
P-ISSN : 2086-3721 E-ISSN: 2865-6050
Vol. 15 No. 2 /December 2026

https://ejournal.uinib.ac.id/jurnal/index.php/ulunnuha/index
DOI: 10.15548/ju.v13i1.12786

Hadith as Electoral Speech Act: Reception and Political Theology in The 2024 Mesuji Campaign

Fatichatus Sadiyah
Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Darussalam Bangkalan
faticha.sadiyah@gmail.com

Abdurrohman
Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Darussalam Bangkalan
abdurrohmanhafi@gmail.com

Abstract

Existing studies on hadith politicization rarely examine how a single local campaign utterance is simultaneously reconstructed textually, enacted performatively, and legitimized theologically, a gap this study addresses through the 2024 Mesuji regental election. The primary data are a verbatim transcript of a regent candidate's campaign speech reconstructing the hadith on caring for orphans, drawn from an official campaign video published on YouTube on 28 October 2024 and triangulated with related news coverage and classical hadith commentaries (Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Riyad al-Salihin). Using qualitative document analysis within a critical discourse analysis frame, the data were examined through four interdisciplinary lenses: hadith reception theory, speech act theory, political theology, and Bourdieu's concept of religious capital, the last of which constitutes this study's principal novelty in linking textual reception to the conversion of religious authority into political capital. The results indicate that the hadith undergoes a functional-instrumental reception, wherein its collective social-ethical meaning is reduced to an individualist, transaction-based promise of paradise to secure electoral support. Speech act analysis shows the candidate employing illocutionary strategies to form spiritual commitments and perlocutionary tactics to generate psychological pressure among voters, while political theology analysis reveals this rhetoric converting religious authority into symbolic capital for political power. This study contributes a theoretical model linking hadith reception, performative utterance, and religious capital to explain how sacred texts are instrumentalized in local electoral politics, shifting rational-deliberative democratic discourse toward identity-driven emotional compliance.

Keywords: Politicization of hadith, textual reception, speech acts, political theology, electoral democracy.

PENDAHULUAN

In Indonesia, the relationship between politics and religion is a complex and evolving phenomenon. In practice, the two often become deeply intertwined, creating a conflict-prone environment particularly in the lead-up to and during general elections. This interplay has given rise to serious issues such as religious extremism, identity politics, and the politicization

of religious symbols.[1] Extremism in the name of religion has emerged as a tangible threat to Indonesia's diversity and social peace, evidenced by the rise of intolerance and violence driven by religious sentiments.[2] In the context of electoral politics, religion is also used to mobilize the masses through the symbolic invocation of particular religious identities, potentially eroding public rationality and undermining the principles of deliberative democracy.[3]

Joko Widodo, President of the Republic of Indonesia from 2019 to 2024, explicitly warned the public about the dangers of politicizing religion and identity in his speech at the June 1, 2024, Pancasila Day ceremony. He stressed the importance of rejecting extremism and the misuse of religious identity for political gain, and urged all Indonesians to welcome the democratic celebration with maturity and joy while remaining firmly committed to the values of Pancasila.[4] This statement emphasizes that the politicization of religion is not a marginal issue, but a real national problem.

The politicization of religion is not new to Indonesia's democratic arena. Studies show that political elites often use religious rhetoric, whether through verses from the Qur'an or the Prophet's hadiths, to build moral legitimacy and win voters' sympathy.[5] A concrete example emerged during the 2024 Mesuji Regency election, when a candidate for regent quoted and reinterpreted a hadith of the Prophet about the virtue of caring for orphans to promise paradise to his supporters. During the campaign, he stated: "God willing, ma'am. Tomorrow, in the afterlife, you can imagine people being called to account. But we will instead be called to receive the intercession of the Prophet, peace be upon him. The Prophet will say, 'Hey, people of Mesuji who voted for number 2 yesterday, come with me, because candidate number 2's program supports orphans so they can enter Paradise with me.'"

Statements like this are concerning because they show how religious texts are used performatively for pragmatic purposes. Rather than serving as a source of public morality, hadith is used as a manipulative tool of political persuasion. This practice could divide society, create psychological pressure rooted in faith, and undermine the integrity of religious texts.[6]

Academic studies on the politicization of religion through hadith have received attention, including research titled "Politisasi Hadis-Hadis al-Sahihain Akun Buletin Dakwah Kaffah (Penggunaan Hadis untuk Kepentingan Ideologi Politik)."[7] "Politisasi Hadis Era

---

[1] Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*; Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII Dan XVIII, Melacak Akar-Akar Pembaruan Islam Di Indonesia*.

[2] Conflict), "Explaining the 2019 Jolo Bombings: The Role of Indonesian ISIS Support Networks."

[3] Mujani and William Liddle, "Politics, Islam, and Public Opinion."

[4] RI, "Pidato Presiden RI Joko Widodo Dalam Upacara Hari Lahir Pancasila."

[5] Qodir, *Islam Politik Dan Demokratisasi Di Indonesia: Membaca Peran Elite Politik Keagamaan*; Mudzhar, *Fatwa-Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia: Sebuah Studi Tentang Pemikiran Hukum Islam Di Indonesia, 1975–1988*.

[6] Lubis, *Manipulasi Agama Dalam Ruang Politik: Kritik Atas Retorika Agama Populis*.

[7] rizaldi, "Politisasi Hadis-Hadis Al-Sahihain Akun Buletin Dakwah Kaffah (Penggunaan Hadis Untuk Kepentingan Ideologi Politik)."

Pilpres: Framing Simantik Hadis-Hadis Politik,"[8] *Revealing The Legal Formal of Politization of Prophetic Hadith in Riyād Al- Sālihin No. 1320*,[9] "Politisasi Hadis dalam Media: Analisis Penggunaan Agama sebagai Instrumen Kampanye Politik,"[10] "Fenomena Ayatisasi di Indonesia (Studi Analisis Ayat-Ayat Politik)."[11] However, these studies have not specifically addressed the material and formal objects examined in this paper. Thus, a gap remains in research on local campaign speeches analyzed performatively through speech act theory and political theology, which is the focus of this study.

In the global landscape of scholarship, the politicization of sacred texts for electoral purposes is not unique to Indonesia. In the Middle East, the use of religious rhetoric by political actors has been widely examined through the lenses of political theology and religious populism, particularly in relation to the instrumentalization of Islamic symbols in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. In Europe, studies of religious populism have highlighted how political parties use Christian symbols to construct exclusive identities in electoral contests. Meanwhile, research in Southeast Asia on the politicization of Quranic verses and hadith in Indonesia, as well as the use of religious symbols in elections in other Muslim-majority countries, points to a similar pattern: narrowing the meaning of sacred texts to mobilize the masses in the short term. These three areas of scholarship have generally been limited to describing religious rhetoric and have not explicitly linked the process of textual reception to the mechanisms through which religious authority is converted into political capital. This study seeks to address that gap by integrating Pierre Bourdieu's concept of religious capital into the framework of hadith reception and speech act theory. Accordingly, the politicization of hadith can be understood not merely as a rhetorical phenomenon, but also as a mechanism for converting religious symbolic capital into political capital in ways that can be analyzed operationally.

Furthermore, this article will critically examine how hadith particularly those concerning the virtue of caring for orphans is received, reinterpreted, and used as a tool of persuasion in electoral politics. The analysis will draw on reception theory, speech act theory, and political theology to explore the effects of this religious rhetoric on the meaning of the text, voter behavior, and the quality of democracy.

This study uses a qualitative document analysis design within a critical discourse analysis framework to examine how hadith about the virtue of caring for orphans is received, reinterpreted, and mobilized as a persuasive tool in local political campaigns in Indonesia. The analysis draws simultaneously on four frameworks rather than applying them in sequence. Hadith reception theory, as developed by Ahmad Rafiq in his studies of the living Qur'an and living Hadith,[12] this is used to show that hadith is understood not only through

[8] Nugraha, Fatihunnada, and Huda, "Politisasi Hadis Era Pilpres: Framing Simantik Hadis-Hadis Politik."

[9] Priyatmaja, "Revealing The Legal Formal Of Politization Of Prophetic Hadith In Riyād Al-Sālihin No. 1320."

[10] Akbar, Faza, and Syahriza, "Politisasi Hadis Dalam Media: Analisis Penggunaan Agama Sebagai Instrumen Kampanye Politik."

[11] Syaifulah, Widayati, and Naelul Huda, "Fenomena Ayatisasi Di Indonesia (Studi Analisis Ayat-Ayat Politik)."

[12] Zuhri, *Living Hadis; Praktik, Resepsi, Teks, Dan Transmisi*.

textual reading but also received aesthetically and functionally, especially when used to legitimize political action. Austin's speech act theory, later developed by Searle,[13] treating campaign statements as three-layered social acts: locution (quoting the text), illocution (the intention to persuade and promise rewards), and perlocution (their effect on voter behavior). Political theology enters through Carl Schmitt's idea that modern political concepts are secularized theological concepts,[14] which is useful for interpreting the mobilization of eschatological symbols such as heaven and intercession, as well as Talal Asad's and Saba Mahmood's postsecular and postcolonial critiques of the manipulative appropriation of spiritual narratives.[15] Pierre Bourdieu's concept of religious capital is used operationally: a candidate's quotation of hadith is understood as the accumulation of religious capital—that is, a claim to religious authority, its conversion into political legitimacy, and its subsequent use to influence voters' perceptions and behavior. These four elements complement one another, allowing the reception of texts, speech acts, political theology, and the conversion of capital to be understood as a unified process of hadith politicization. The data come from written documentation: major hadith collections (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, and Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn); a campaign speech video by a candidate for regent of Mesuji, uploaded by CNN Indonesia to its YouTube channel on October 28, 2024; and supporting literature, including recent empirical studies on the exegetical, aesthetic, and functional reception of hadith in animated films and on social media.

Data collection was conducted in three stages. Speech recordings were documented from social media and online news portals. News coverage and the circulation of content were observed to understand the context of publication and public responses. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim, noting not only the verbal content but also intonation, emphasis, and the circumstances surrounding each utterance. The analysis proceeded in four steps. First, the data were reduced to segments containing religious references, quotations or paraphrases of hadith, and spiritually framed claims oriented toward electoral goals. Second, these segments were categorized by form of reception (textual, aesthetic, functional-instrumental), dimension of speech act (locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary), and political theology strategy (symbolic legitimation, affective mobilization, and delegitimation of meaning). The data were then coded to enable consistent identification of discourse patterns. The final step involved an in-depth reading of the coded data using all four frameworks. The concept of *religious capital* was used to explain how religious authority is transformed into the symbolic capital of power. This reading was operationalized through Fairclough's three-dimensional model, applied in a sequential manner. At the textual level, the analysis examined word choice, sentence structure, and modality in the transcripts. At the level of discursive practice, it traced the production of the utterances (campaign events), their distribution (official channels and social media), and their consumption by voters. At the level of social practice, the utterances were connected to the dynamics of the 2024 Mesuji regional election and patterns of religion-politics relations in Indonesia. Thus, findings at the textual level were not used as the basis for conclusions until they had been examined in

[13] White, Austin, and Urmson, "How to Do Things with Words"; Koller and Searle, "Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language."

[14] Kim, "Carl Schmitt. Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty."

[15] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*; Talal and Asad, *Form. Secul. Christ. Islam. Mod.*

relation to the other two levels. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, by comparing the transcripts with coverage from other media outlets and public comments on digital platforms; theoretical triangulation, by examining the same data through all four frameworks to test the consistency of the findings; and peer debriefing with fellow researchers in hadith studies and political studies to check for interpretive bias before formulating the interpretation. The study's outcome is a critical framework that can be revisited to assess the ethics of using religious texts in electoral democracy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of Hadith Reception in Political Campaigns

The use of hadith in political campaigns, as seen in the 2024 Mesuji regency election, illustrates how religious texts are reinterpreted to support particular political agendas. In one statement, a candidate for regent said that voters who chose candidate number two would receive the intercession of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and enter heaven because they supported a program to provide assistance to orphans. The statement read: *"InshaAllah, bu. Besok di akhirat njenengan bisa membayangkan orang mendapat perhitungan nanti di akhirat, tetapi kita malah dipanggil mendapat syafaat dari Rasulullah SAW, kita dipanggil, 'hai, orang-orang Mesuji kemarin yang memilih No 2 ayo ikut bersamaku karena program No 2 menyantuni anak yatim masuk surga bersamaku,' kata Nabi.*"

Theologically, the statement refers to an authentic hadith narrated by Bukhari and Tirmidhi about the virtue of caring for orphans: أنا وَكافلُ اليتيمِ في الجنَّةِ كَهاتين، وأشارَ بأصبُعَيْهِ يعني: السَّبَّابةَ والوسطى "I and the one who cares for an orphan will be in Paradise like these two fingers," he said, gesturing with his index and middle fingers.[1617] Classical commentaries on this hadith (Sharh Riyad al-Salihin, Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi, Sharh Sahih Muslim, Fath al-Bari, and Mirqat al-Mafatih) consistently interpret the term *kafil al-yatim* broadly: it refers to anyone whether a relative or not, male or female who genuinely meets an orphan's financial and emotional needs.[181920] The closeness to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in Paradise promised in this hadith is understood as a metaphor for the high status of this social act.[21] on the absolute condition that the act is performed solely for the sake of Allah; that reward in the Hereafter is the fruit of sincerity, not worldly motives or an ambition for power.[22] In Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Al-Ghazali even asserts that deeds performed with the intention of showing off or pursuing power lose their spiritual value in the sight of God.[23]

The findings of this commentary are consistent with the principle of Islamic jurisprudence that religious texts must not be understood in isolation or apart from their original context; a figurative meaning applies only when there is a clear contextual indicator

[16] al-Bukhari, *Al-Jami' Al-Sahih Li Al-Bukhari*.

[17] Tirmizī, "Sunan Tirmizī."

[18] Hatibah, *Sharh Riyad Al-Salihin*.

[19] Abu al-Ula Muhammad `Abd al-Rahman bin `Abd al-Rahim, *Tuhfat Al-Ahwadhi Bi Sharh Jami Al Turmudhi*.

[20] Nawawi, *Syarah Shahih Muslim*.

[21] Ahmad bin `Ali bin Hajar, "Fath Al-Bari Sharh Sahih Imam Abi `Abd Al-Lah Muhammad Bin Ismail Al-Bukhari."

[22] Al-Qari, *Mirqat Al-Mafatih Sharh Mishkat Al-Masabih*.

[23] Ghazali (al), *Ihya` Ulum Al-Din*.

pointing to it.الكلام لا يحمل على المعنى المجازي إلا بوجود قرينة تدل على ذلك. Al-Tibi also emphasizes in Sharh al-Mishkat that this hadith cannot be separated from the general objectives of Islamic law, namely the protection of vulnerable groups.[24] In other words, classical authorities consistently understood this hadith as an encouragement to engage in social good sincerely and individually, not as a means of political support for a particular candidate. This stands in sharp contrast to how the hadith was used in the campaign speech examined in this study.

In terms of reception, the regent candidate's use of the hadith is a form of instrumental reception: the hadith text is not used to foster social piety, but rather as a rhetorical tool to create an emotional bond with voters through unfounded promises of rewards in the afterlife. This is an example of what Greg Fealy and Sally White call[25] as "religious populism," in which revealed religion based on scripture is used to sanctify a cause[26] or the exploitation of religious symbols and narratives to attract mass support, rather than to foster a comprehensive theological understanding.

Thus, politicians' use of this hadith represents the instrumentalization of religious symbols for electoral purposes, blurring the line between prophetic ethics and political strategy. This reflects the tension between the hadith's original meaning and the realities of modern political competition, in which narratives about the afterlife are used to mobilize support in this world.

The process of reconstructing the meaning of the hadith in the campaign speech can be understood as three successive stages of transformation. First, decontextualization: the phrase *kafil al-yatim*, which in its commentary is generic and unrelated to any political choice, is simply transferred to the campaign stage, causing its condition of individual sincerity to disappear from the quotation. Second, personalization and conditionalization: the promise of intercession, which the hadith extends to anyone who sincerely cares for an orphan, is turned in the speech into a restricted promise that applies only to "the people of Mesuji who vote for No. 2," making an otherworldly reward conditional on voting behavior. Third, retelling as an instrument of electoral persuasion: the hadith quotation no longer functions as moral advice but is recast as a narrative that convinces listeners that political support is equivalent to a righteous deed, while also legitimizing the candidate as someone entitled to promise a reward in the afterlife. These three stages show that the religious message is not merely quoted but actively reengineered as an instrument of persuasion, political legitimation, and public support mobilization.

Viewed through Pierre Bourdieu's concept of religious capital, this practice represents an attempt to accumulate religious capital and convert it into political capital. As a candidate who holds no formal religious authority, the prospective regent claims religious authority on the spot by quoting and "interpreting" hadith in public. In Bourdieu's framework, this is an attempt to gain legitimacy in the religious field without following the authoritative scholarly path of hadith studies. The religious capital acquired in this way is then converted into political capital through a promise of intercession directly tied to electoral choice, effectively exchanging voters' ballots for claims of salvation in the afterlife.

[24] Tibi (al), *Al-Kashif `an Haqaiq Al-Sunan*.
[25] Fealy and White, *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*.
[26] Zúquete, "Populism and Religion."

This conversion is effective because it draws on the public's deeply rooted trust in the authority of sacred texts, without requiring the candidate to have genuine expertise or a position within established structures of religious authority. Thus, the politicization of hadith in this case is not merely a matter of interpretive distortion; it is also a mechanism for accumulating symbolic capital that structurally benefits political actors and may devalue authentic religious authority.

Analysis of Religious Speech Acts

The statement by the Mesuji regent candidate promising voters the Prophet's intercession and a place in heaven represents a religious speech act that can be analyzed using J. L. Austin's theory of performativity, as outlined in "How to Do Things with Words".[27] In this theory, every utterance has three dimensions: locution (the locutionary act), illocution (the illocutionary act), and perlocution (the perlocutionary act). Locution is the literal speech act: the act of uttering a word or sentence with a particular grammatical structure and meaning. In a political campaign, a locution might be a statement such as, "If you vote for me, you will receive the Prophet's intercession." Illocution, meanwhile, is the specific intention or purpose the speaker seeks to convey through the utterance. This is where the main force of speech acts lies: the speaker does not merely say something but also does something through their words, such as making a promise, giving an order, issuing a warning, or making a threat. Perlocution is the impact or effect of an utterance on the listener or audience, whether psychological, emotional, or expressed through concrete action. Thus, locution is what is said (the literal meaning), illocution is what is meant or done through the utterance, and perlocution is its effect on the listener.

Locutively, statements such as "*InshaAllah, bu. Besok di akhirat njenengan... dipanggil mendapat syafaat dari Rasulullah SAW... karena memilih No 2*" It conveys information linking political choices to rewards in the afterlife. However, the statement's main force lies in its illocutionary dimension: it creates a divine spiritual promise and a veiled moral threat that mobilizes voters through psychological pressure and religious symbols.

The statement does more than convey information; it creates a new social reality: that choosing a particular candidate is a path to salvation in the afterlife. This is where Saba Mahmood's analysis in "Politics of Piety" becomes relevant.[28] This is evident when he explains that religious speech can serve as an instrument for shaping moral and political compliance. In terms of perlocutionary effects, its impact on voters' psychology is considerable: it instills a sense of spiritual responsibility and fear of the consequences in the afterlife if they do not vote for a particular candidate. This reflects what Pierre Bourdieu[29] referred to as symbolic violence, namely the use of language that appears neutral but produces symbolic domination through religious influence.

Furthermore, Judith Butler in *Excitable Speech*[30] explains that repeated performative utterances can create a widely believed reality. In this case, using a hadith about orphans as the basis for a political narrative illustrates a process of citation: invoking religious authority

[27] White, Austin, and Urmson, "How to Do Things with Words."
[28] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*.
[29] Buchanan et al., "Language and Symbolic Power."
[30] Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*.

to create political legitimacy. The candidate strategically draws on sacred text and frames it within the context of electoral competition, a practice that, according to Hussein Ali Agrama in "Questioning Secularism"[31] It is a form of "emptying out theological meaning" in order to fill it with a worldly political agenda.

In Indonesia, practices like this are nothing new. Research by Saiful Mujani and R. William Liddle in *Journal of Democracy*[32] reveals that religious rhetoric has proven effective in influencing Muslim voters' behavior, especially in areas with a strong traditional religious base. However, using narratives about the afterlife in a democratic political arena like this raises an ethical dilemma. As Michael Feener states in *Sharia and Social Engineering*, exploiting religious symbols in politics can undermine the authenticity of religious practice and create social fragmentation and belief-based polarization.

Thus, religious rhetoric in campaigns is not merely rhetorical flourish, but a complex communication strategy that touches on faith, identity, and power. It can shape public consciousness, manipulate collective emotions, and even distort interpretations of religious texts.

Political Theology and the Delegitimization of the Meaning of Hadith

In this context, political theology views power not only as a social contract but also as a reflection of divine will. For example, a king may be regarded as God's representative on earth, or state policies may be justified on religious grounds. This practice can arise in both theocratic monarchies and democracies, when religious symbols or texts are mobilized to serve particular political interests. In Indonesia, political theology is evident when religious leaders or politicians use religious arguments, such as hadith or verses from the Quran, to influence voters' political choices. When used ethically, this can strengthen social cohesion. However, this practice also risks triggering symbolic manipulation that threatens democracy, especially when religion is used merely as a tool to win votes rather than as an authentic guide for public morality.

In the context of contemporary Indonesian politics, political theology plays an important role in shaping the relationship between religious discourse and power. The authority of religious texts, particularly hadith, serves not only as a source of morality and spirituality but is also strategically used to support particular political agendas. Political candidates and religious figures often quote hadith or use religious symbols to legitimize their moral claims and political standing before the public. This practice does more than bring religious values into politics; it also shows how religious language becomes an instrument of power laden with worldly interests. As Talal Asad observes in *Formations of the Secular*[33], Religion in the public sphere is never free from power structures that seek to regulate, interpret, and use it.

[31] Wolff, "Questioning Secularism: Islam, Sovereignty, and the Rule of Law in Modern Egypt."
[32] Mujani and William Liddle, "Politics, Islam, and Public Opinion."
[33] Talal and Asad, *Form. Secul. Christ. Islam. Mod.*

Furthermore, as understood within the framework Carl Schmitt[34] and sharpened by Mark Lilla[35], Political theology shows that behind religious claims lies a desire to regulate, direct, and even dominate public behavior. In this context, invoking hadiths about the rewards for choosing a Muslim leader or promises of paradise for voters who support a particular candidate is no longer a form of religious outreach, but rather a form of political affect management that relies on fear, hopes for the afterlife, and piety as tools for political mobilization. This blurs the line between religious counsel and electoral persuasion, ultimately eroding public trust in religious authorities and undermining the sacredness of holy texts.

The application of Schmitt's concepts to this research data can be traced directly through three elements. First, the friend–enemy distinction is evident in the candidate's appeal: "Hey, people of Mesuji who voted for No. 2 yesterday, come join me." Performatively, this sentence divides the audience into "us" (No. 2 voters, who are promised intercession) and "them" (other voters, who are implicitly excluded from that promise), thereby constructing electoral choice as a boundary between salvation and damnation rather than as an ordinary political preference. Second, Schmitt's core concept of political theology that modern political concepts are secularized theological concepts is apparent in the way the authority to "call" voters to heaven, which in Islamic theology belongs solely to Allah and concerns the Prophet's intercession, is rhetorically transferred to the political candidate through the claim, "we are called… the Prophet said." The concept of salvation in the afterlife is secularized here into a campaign instrument. Third, sovereignty in Schmitt's sense that the sovereign is the one entitled to decide on the exception is reflected in the candidate's positioning of himself as the arbiter of who is included in this promise of salvation and who is not. The candidate implicitly assumes the authoritative role of determining the boundaries of the voters' moral community, a form of symbolic sovereignty that should lie beyond the reach of profane political authority. These three elements show that this campaign statement is not merely ordinary religious rhetoric, but a concrete application of the logic of political theology within the sphere of electoral democracy.

In a democratic space that upholds rational deliberation and freedom of expression, the use of hadith as a political instrument sparks serious debate about moral authority. Hadith holds an esteemed position as a source of Islamic law and ethics. However, when used manipulatively in political campaigns, its moral authority becomes blurred. Religious authority, which should serve as an ethical and transcendent guide, is instead reduced to a transactional tool of populist rhetoric. As Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im notes in *Islam and the Secular State*[36], a serious danger arises when religious norms are imposed or used in politics without a clear separation between the private and public spheres, as this creates opportunities for those in power to exploit religion.

The practice of delegitimizing the meaning of hadith in the political arena is not merely a methodological issue in interpreting religious texts; it also carries profound ideological and ethical consequences for the Muslim community's sociopolitical order. When

[34] Kim, "Carl Schmitt. Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty."
[35] "The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West."
[36] Sabet, "Islam and the Secular State."

hadith as part of the second source of revelation after the Qur'an is removed from its normative context and inserted into political rhetoric, the authority of the text is distorted. This process not only violates the principles of classical hermeneutics, as explained in hadith commentaries by scholars such as Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalani (Fath al-Bari) and al-Nawawi (Sharh Sahih Muslim), but also reduces a spiritual message to a mere instrument of pragmatic persuasion.

The consequences of this practice of delegitimizing the meaning of hadith are serious for democratic ethics and social cohesion. Democracy requires a rational public sphere, equal participation, and the moral autonomy of every citizen. When religious symbolsare incorporated into the logic of political elections, these values can be distorted. This may undermine citizens' freedom to make rational choices and create moral pressure that divides society along religious lines. As Greg Fealy and Sally White warn in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*[37], The politicization of religion risks undermining social cohesion by reinforcing identity divisions and marginalizing more moderate alternative voices.

Furthermore, the misuse of hadith texts in the democratic sphere has serious implications for social integration. When religion is turned into a political identity, polarization can emerge in a pluralistic society. Differences in religious views become political differences, and vice versa. This situation fosters symbolic intolerance and reinforces what Olivier Roy calls *Islamization of radicalism*[38] rather than the radicalization of Islam, this refers to the use of religious identity to sharpen political and ideological boundaries. In the long run, this practice can lead to "spiritual corruption" and trigger a crisis of religious scholars' authority, as they are no longer seen as neutral but as partisan.

Thus, the use of hadith authority in politics cannot be separated from the dynamics of power and ideology. This practice not only distorts hadith's primary role as a source of moral guidance but also creates new arenas of contestation, where religious legitimacy is contested for electoral gain. The public sphere, in turn, undergoes a form of "pseudo-sacralization" that does not reflect authentic spirituality but instead turns it into a battleground for votes, at the expense of religious substance and democratic values.

CONCLUSION

This study addresses three questions at the heart of its inquiry: How was the hadith about the virtue of caring for orphans received in the 2024 Mesuji regional election campaign? How did the campaign rhetoric function as speech acts? And how was religious authority converted into political power? In response to the first question, the hadith underwent a functional-instrumental reception: a call to sincere social service was reduced to a transactional promise of paradise, contingent on a particular electoral choice. This reduction took place in three steps: detaching the hadith from its context, personalizing it, and retelling it as an instrument of persuasion. In response to the second question, speech-act analysis shows that the candidate's rhetoric operated at the illocutionary level as a promise and a form of spiritual pressure, while also producing perlocutionary effects by

[37] Fealy and White, *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*.

[38] Dawson, "Olivier Roy and the 'Islamization of Radicalism': Overview and Critique of a Theory of Western Jihadist Radicalization."

psychologically influencing voters. This resulted in what Bourdieu calls symbolic violence. In response to the third question, Schmitt's political theology and Bourdieu's concept of religious capital show how textual authority was converted into the symbolic capital of power through the logic of the friend-enemy distinction and a claim to symbolic sovereignty over who is entitled to enter the promise of salvation. The cost is considerable: rational deliberation is weakened, while polarization along religious identity lines intensifies in local democracy.

Theoretically, this study offers an integrative model linking hadith reception, speech act theory, political theology, and religious capital a dimension of capital conversion that previous studies have rarely addressed, as they have generally focused on social media or national discourse. Methodologically, combining qualitative document analysis with Fairclough's three-dimensional model, supported by source triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and peer debriefing, could be applied to other local election cases. In practical terms, the findings underscore the need to strengthen voters' religious and political literacy so they can distinguish authentic religious guidance from electoral rhetoric, as well as to establish a clearer ethical framework for election administrators and monitors regarding the use of religious texts in campaigns. The limitations are clear: the data come from a single event in one electoral district and focus on texts and discourse, without data on audience reception. As a result, the findings cannot yet be generalized, and their actual effects on voting behavior remain uncertain. Future research should examine cases across multiple regions, include voter interviews or surveys, and develop operational indicators of religious capital in Indonesia's electoral context so that the conversion of religious capital into political capital can be measured across cases.

Aknowlegdement

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who have contributed to the completion of this research. Special appreciation is extended to the scholars whose works on hadith studies, religious reception, speech act theory, and political theology have provided valuable theoretical foundations for this study. The author also acknowledges the contributions of previous researchers whose findings have enriched the analysis of religious discourse and its use in political contexts. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the development of critical hadith studies and promote a more ethical relationship between religious authority and democratic political practices in Indonesia.

Bibliography

Abu al-Ula Muhammad `Abd al-Rahman bin `Abd al-Rahim, Al-Mabarkufuri. *Tuhfat Al-Ahwadhi Bi Sharh Jami Al Turmudhi*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.

Ahmad bin `Ali bin Hajar, al `Asqalani. "Fath Al-Bari Sharh Sahih Imam Abi `Abd Al-Lah Muhammad Bin Ismail Al-Bukhari." In *10*. Riyad: Maktabah al-Mulk Fahd, 2001.

Akbar, Fauzan, Asrar Mabrur Faza, and Rahmi Syahriza. "Politisasi Hadis Dalam Media: Analisis Penggunaan Agama Sebagai Instrumen Kampanye Politik." *Values; Jurnal Kajian Islam Multidisiplin* 2, no. 1 (2025): 127–45.

al-Bukhari, Imam. *Al-Jami' Al-Sahih Li Al-Bukhari*. 1st ed. Riyad: Maktabah al-Mulk Fahd, n.d.

Al-Qari, Ali bin Muhammad al-Harawi. *Mirqat Al-Mafatih Sharh Mishkat Al-Masabih*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2002.

Azra, Azyumardi. *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII Dan XVIII, Melacak Akar-Akar Pembaruan Islam Di Indonesia*. Bandung: Mizan, 1992.

Buchanan, Ian, Pierre Bourdieu, Gino Raymond, and Matthew Adamson. "Language and Symbolic Power." *SubStance* 22, no. 2/3 (1993). https://doi.org/10.2307/3685295.

Buehler, Michael. "Shari'a and Social Engineering: The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia by R. Michael Feener." *Indonesia* 98, no. 1 (2014). https://doi.org/10.1353/ind.2014.0014.

Butler, Judith. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, 2021. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003146759.

Conflict), IPAC (Institute for Policy Analysis of. "Explaining the 2019 Jolo Bombings: The Role of Indonesian ISIS Support Networks." Jakarta, 2020. https://understandingconflict.org/en.

Dawson, Lorne L. "Olivier Roy and the 'Islamization of Radicalism': Overview and Critique of a Theory of Western Jihadist Radicalization." *Journal for Deradicalization*, no. 30 (2022).

Fealy, Greg, and Sally White. *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*. *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, 2008.

Ghazali (al), Imam. *Ihya` Ulum Al-Din*. Beirut: Dar al-Ma`rufah, n.d.

Hatibah, Shaykh al-Tabib Ahmad. *Sharh Riyad Al-Salihin*. t.k: Maktabah al-Shamilah, n.d.

Hefner, Robert W. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, 2011. https://doi.org/10.2307/3557788.

Kim, Bonggeun. "Carl Schmitt. Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty." *Theological Research Institute of Sahmyook University* 22, no. 1 (2020). https://doi.org/10.56035/tod.2020.22.1.163.

Koller, Alice, and John R. Searle. "Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language." *Language* 46, no. 1 (1970). https://doi.org/10.2307/412428.

Lubis, Riza Sihbudi. *Manipulasi Agama Dalam Ruang Politik: Kritik Atas Retorika Agama Populis*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2022.

Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2006.108.3.603.

Mudzhar, Mohammad Atho. *Fatwa-Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia: Sebuah Studi Tentang Pemikiran Hukum Islam Di Indonesia, 1975–1988*. Jakarta: INIS (Institus Studi Islam), 1993.

Mujani, Saiful, and R. William Liddle. "Politics, Islam, and Public Opinion." *Journal of Democracy*, 2004. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2004.0006.

Nawawi, Imam. *Syarah Shahih Muslim*. V. Jakarta: Darus Sunnah, 2012.

Nugraha, Mugy, Fatihunnada Fatihunnada, and Nalil Huda. "Politisasi Hadis Era Pilpres:

Framing Simantik Hadis-Hadis Politik." *Al Imarah : Jurnal Pemerintahan Dan Politik Islam* 8, no. 1 (2023): 63. https://doi.org/10.29300/imr.v8i1.8982.

Priyatmaja, Ahmad Amiruddin. "Revealing The Legal Formal Of Politization Of Prophetic Hadith In Riyād Al- Sālihin No. 1320." *Jurnal Living Hadis* 9, no. 1 (2024): 31–48.

Qodir, Zuly. *Islam Politik Dan Demokratisasi Di Indonesia: Membaca Peran Elite Politik Keagamaan*. IRCisoD. Yogyakarta, 2019.

RI, Setneg. "Pidato Presiden RI Joko Widodo Dalam Upacara Hari Lahir Pancasila," 2024. https://www.setneg.go.id/.

Rizaldi, Muh. "Politisasi Hadis-hadis Al-Sahihain Akun Buletin Dakwah Kaffah (Penggunaan Hadis Untuk Kepentingan Ideologi Politik)." UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2023.

Sabet, Amr G. E. "Islam and the Secular State." *American Journal of Islam and Society* 27, no. 2 (2010). https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v27i2.1326.

Syaifulah, Syaifullah, Romlah Widayati, and Ade Naelul Huda. "Fenomena Ayatisasi Di Indonesia (Studi Analisis Ayat-Ayat Politik)." *Hikami: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (2022): 86.

Talal, Asad, and Talal Asad. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Vol. 107, 2003.

"The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West." *Choice Reviews Online* 45, no. 08 (2008). https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.45-4321.

Tibi (al), Sharaf al-Din al-Husayn bin `Abd al-Lah. *Al-Kashif `an Haqaiq Al-Sunan*. Riyad: Maktabah Nizar Mustafa al-Baz, 1997.

Tirmizī, Muḥammad b Īsā b S̱awra b Mūsa b aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk at-. "Sunan Tirmizī." Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1996.

White, Alan R., J. L. Austin, and J. O. Urmson. "How to Do Things with Words." *Analysis* 23 (1963). https://doi.org/10.2307/3326622.

Wolff, S. "Questioning Secularism: Islam, Sovereignty, and the Rule of Law in Modern Egypt." *Journal of Church and State* 56, no. 3 (2014). https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/csu048.

Zuhri, Saifuddin and Subkhani Kusuma Dewi. *Living Hadis; Praktik, Resepsi, Teks, Dan Transmisi*. First edit. Yogyakarta: Q-Media, 2018.

Zúquete, Jose Pedro. "Populism and Religion." Edited by Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy. *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. Oxford University Press, October 26, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803560.013.22.

© 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).