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### Ulama vs. a Businessman, Which One is More Popular for Raising Electability in Presidential Elections?

*Ulama vs un empresario, ¿cuál es más popular para aumentar la elegibilidad  
en las elecciones presidenciales?*

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#### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the popularity between a famous ulama and a businessman towards an Indonesian leader's election. This study uses secondary data from Goggle trends and captures the statistic result using snipping tools. The sample of this study is divided in two groups, the supporters and the presidential candidates. The results shows that popularity points out positive issues about Jokowi as the incumbent is higher than his negative issues while positive issue about Prabowo as challenger is lower than the negative issues. It can be concluded that the politicization of religion still has a big impact on attracting voters rather than the negative issues of presidential candidates.

**Keywords:** Challenger, incumbent, presidential election, religion.

#### RESUMEN

Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar la popularidad entre un famoso ulama y un hombre de negocios hacia la elección del líder indonesio. Este estudio utiliza datos secundarios de las tendencias de Goggle y captura el resultado estadístico mediante herramientas de recorte. La muestra de este estudio se divide en dos, los simpatizantes y los candidatos presidenciales. El resultado muestra que los puntos de popularidad del problema positivo sobre Jokowi como titular son más altos que sus problemas negativos, mientras que el problema positivo sobre Prabowo como retador es menor que el problema negativo. Se puede concluir que la politicización de la religión todavía tiene un gran impacto para atraer votantes más que el tema negativo de los candidatos presidenciales.

**Palabras clave:** Desafiante, titular, elección presidencial, religión.

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## INTRODUCTION

The presidential election is part of democracy in each country. The election decides who will be the next leader in a certain country by the voters. Indonesia, as one of the countries that use the democratic system, also holds a presidential election every five years. All of the residents of Indonesia are free to vote for their candidates and, under the protection of the law from any pressure or restrictions to direct the voters to one of the candidates. Indonesia applies the principle of free democracy in politics after undergoing dictatorship for 32 years. After 32 years under the dictatorship that ended in 1998, Indonesian people perceive that democracy is the system that should be implemented fully without pressure from the government. Dictatorship defies the principle of democracy that the highest power is in the hands of the people, not the government or president (Borah: 2016, pp. 326-338).

Democracy is currently supported as an indicator of a country's political development. Democracy occupies a vital position concerning the distribution of power in a country. Indonesia's governmental system is generally based on the concepts and principles of "Trias Politica," with state power obtained from the people must also be used for the welfare and prosperity of the people. Montesquieu stated that trias politica means political power in a country can be separated into three different positions, which executive or law enforcer, legislative (and judiciary or supervisor of law enforcement (Susanto: 2019, pp. 139-158).

Trias Politica becomes very important to be taken into account because historical facts record that government power (executive) is so large that it is unable to form an equal right and civilized society. Moreover, the absolute power of government often leads to violations of human rights. Express an opinion is a right for every citizen guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution; even the right to freedom of opinion occupies the highest position in the principles of democracy and liberalization. But the rights in expressing opinion still have corridors or legal restrictions so that there will be no friction in society caused by the freedom of speech. The right to freedom in expressing an opinion should not violate the rights of others, because basically, every citizen has the right to freedom of opinion in the same position (Curini & Pinto: 2016, pp. 184-197).

In Indonesia, the implementation of the presidential election was also followed by the general election to vote for the house of the representative member in local and central government. Each candidate, whether presidential nor the house of representatives, always have their own supporters. Thus, each candidate formed a winning team to build the best strategy for gaining as many voters as they can. Indeed, not only the sportsmanlike what legal competition commonly does but also black campaign to take down the reputation of the competitors (Lim: 2013, pp. 636-657). In Indonesia, where the issue of religion becomes sensitive becomes the ammunition of the winning team of each candidate to attack. The emerge of the digital era that allows society to give their speech across the globe creates the buzzers or content makers to influence society to create alternate beliefs or new truths about certain candidates (Bol: 2016, pp. 93-104).

Influencers and buzzers became the same important as the winning team on the general plus presidential election in Indonesia. They whether can either destroy or build a sudden reputation in social media so fast that society cannot realize the turn of tides. In 2019, Jokowi used Erick Thohir as his official winning team leader, while Prabowo emphasizes his team on Rizieq Shihab. Rizieq uses propaganda of religion as a weapon to gain massive voters as well, while Erick uses economic development data as the ammunition. Besides legal movement, both candidates also use informal ways such as buzzers to maintain their voters so that there are no swing voters created (Adi et al.: 2019, pp. 411-416). Based on that background, this study aims to analyze the comparison between rizieq and their popularity toward the issue of their candidates on the internet. The practical implication of this study is hoped to become insight for the society that politics is just a game of winning the throne or authority, not solely for the sake of right idealism.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative method in researching the data. This study uses secondary data statistics about the trends in Google. A survey is used because the data is easy to be gathered and also cost-saving. Moreover, the advancement of digital technology creates opportunities to survey for free (Wardhana: 2020, pp. 35–42). This study gathers the data through Google trends because it can provide free samples with specific clusters and genres suitable for the designed purpose of the research (Irindayanti et al.: 2018, pp. 47–64).

This study uses simple random sampling to gather the data. The sample of the study is the users of Google from Indonesia in the range of time started on the first of January to the 27th of June 2019. The reason why this study picks that range of time because the first presidential candidates' debate is in January, followed by the next debates until the fifth time on 13 of April 2019. Moreover, the disputes over the voting result that was settled by the constitutional court until the decision on 27 June 2019 causes massive disruption and chaos over the country. The chaos is not only in the real-world that led many victims but also in social media that attacked other ethnicities with racial issues and religion. The traffic of the internet at that length of time is boiled and can lead to any chaos with just a single provoke (Irindayanti et al., 2018).

The inclusion criteria of the sample are based on the keywords that are become trending searches in google. Those keywords are "Muhammad Riziek Shihab" and "Erick thohir," which represent the winning team of two presidential candidates. Then some keywords are separated into two categories, positive issue and negative issue. Positive issues include "Pembangunan infrastruktur" means "infrastructure building" for Jokowi, and "president ijtima ulama" means "president of the result of a forum of ulama". Negative issues include "antek asing" means "foreign henchman" and "antek PKI" means "henchman of the communist party" for Jokowi, while Prabowo are "khilafah" means "Islamic governance system", "ijtima ulama" means "forum of ulama", and "OK' OCE" as the program of entrepreneurship led by Sandiaga Uno. The data are gathered from 34 provinces of Indonesia (Borah: 2016, pp. 326-338).

This study uses popularity points of each trend that is represented by keywords, started from 0-100. Popularity points itself is based on the number of how many internet users search for information related to certain keywords using google. The popularity point is divided into each country and a certain range of time (Wardhana: 2020, pp. 35–42). But zero points do not mean that there are no internet users search for the desired information, but simply only a very small number of users search that. The data will be analyzed using causal interpretation analysis to relate the data with the actual event to analyze if there are a cause and effect relationship (Pussymanov et al.: 2018, pp. 824–837; Leung: 2019, pp. 15–27).

## RESULTS

Indonesia held a presidential election along with the general election to vote for the house of representatives, as well as the president and vice president. In 2019, the political scope of the election was different from the previous presidential election in 2014, which emphasizes the negative side of both candidates. In 2014, both Prabowo and Jokowi were the new figures in the election. But the issue of the rise of the new Order created enough fear in society to avoid choosing Prabowo, while there is still no significant defective report from Jokowi's track record (Wardhana: 2020, pp. 35–42). In 2019, the nuance of political issues shifted into the problem of religion and race. Jokowi issued like to oppress Muslim society, while Prabowo issued to get involved with radicalism.

Such an issue is started by the case of blasphemy and led to public resistance by the founder of the Indonesia Ulama Front, Muhammad Riziek Shihab, which later gain massive support from any Muslims across Indonesia. He becomes the key figure to support Prabowo as a candidate, using the issue of Muslim society in Indonesia (Winarni et al.: 2020, pp. 22-46). Jokowi uses Erick Thohir, a young entrepreneur with

international scale companies, as a key figure to support him. While Rizieq uses the issue of religion, Erick uses the issue of Jokowi's achievement in developing the country's infrastructure (Negara & Ramayandi: 2020, pp. 1–21).

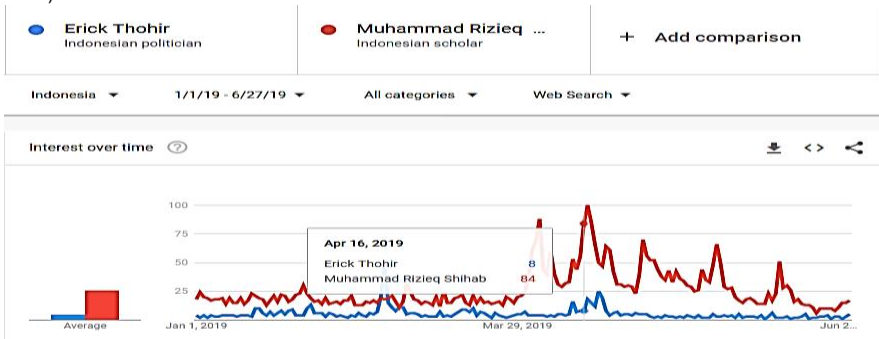


Figure 1. Popularity point between trends of “rizieq shihab” and “erick thohir”

The figure above shows that the trends of Muhammad Rizieq Shihab are higher than Erick thohir. The popularity points of rizeq reached their peak in April 2019 in 84 points, leaving Erick far behind, which is only 8 points. The figure above also shows that the average popularity points of Rizieq are higher than Erick. The graph itself can be influenced by a certain event that triggers the popularity points to increase.

One of the reasons because Rizieq Shihab is famous four years later due to his action during the governor election in Jakarta as a capital city. One of the reasons because Rizieq is widely known by Indonesian people than Erick thohir that is only exclusively known by big businessmen before joining the winning team. Rizieq is popular since the issue of blasphemy by former governor of Jakarta, Ahok, that he as the leader of Islamic supporter front or FPI, gathers massive Muslim supporters to demand the police to arrest Ahok. Not only that, but He is also widely known as the descendant of the prophet Mohammed SAW and labeled as a "sacred person." He and other Muslim authorities knew as "ulama" formed the brotherhood of 212 to maintain the Islamic rule into part of society's life (Syailendra: 2017).

Ulama is respected in Indonesia because Indonesia has the biggest number of Muslims in the world. Thus, the foundation of Pancasila, as well as the history of this nation's independence, also resulted heavily from the struggle of Muslims and groups of Ulama against the conqueror. Moreover, the title of "Habib" or the descendant of Prophet Muhammad, is also recognized as a higher level of Muslim than ordinary Ulama (Hadiz: 2019, pp. 271–290).

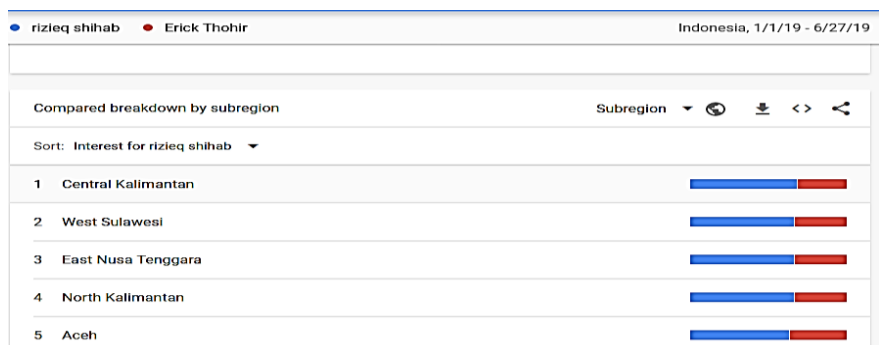


Figure 2. Ranking of the region with the highest popularity index about Rizieq Shihab

The figure above shows that Central Kalimantan ranked first in searching for information related to Rizieq Shihab. Those five regions have a popularity point of Rizieq Shihab far higher than Erick thohir. It can be seen in the figure above that Rizieq Shihab trends that is represented by a blue bar surpass the red bar that represents Erick thohir popularity point. Moreover, four from five regions above, except East Nusa Tenggara, mostly consist of Muslim people who also support brotherhood 212. Prabowo uses brotherhood 212 as political tools to increase his voter number and gathers swing voters into his loyal voters. Susilowati et al. (Susilowati et al.: 2019, pp. 58–79) in their research state that religion and politics are close in relationship, especially in the modern context. Religion and nation always try to dominate each other and are inseparable from one another. The reason because religious and national life both have a fairly fundamental dimension, namely the social dimension (Susilowati et al.: 2019, pp. 58–79).

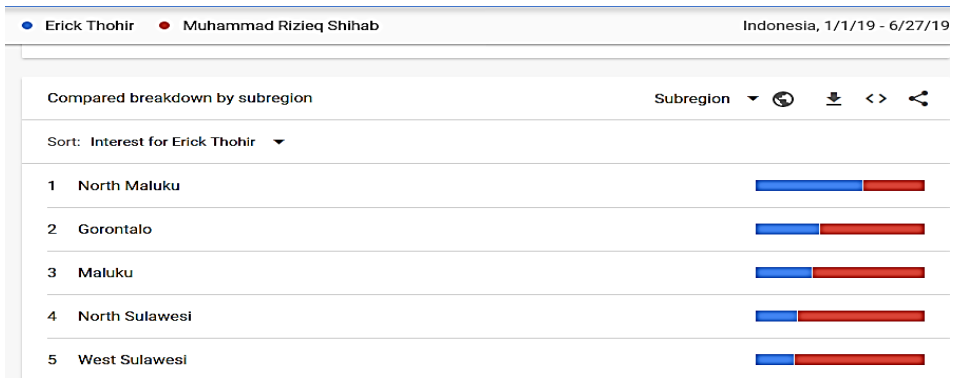


Figure 3. Top 5 regions with the highest popularity point of Erick thohir.

The figure above shows that North Maluku is the first rank that has the popular point of Erick thohir on google. The fact that Erick's popularity points are dominated by Rizieq in the five regions above shows that information about Rizieq is searched more frequently by people. One of the reasons for the biggest religion in those five regions is Islam also affects the popularity points. North Maluku is dominated by Muslim 75,34% of the total residents, South East Sulawesi, which has 96,2 % Islam, Jambi 94,27% Islam, and South Kalimantan 96 % Islam. The sheer number of Muslims in those five regions can increase the popular points of one topic significantly.

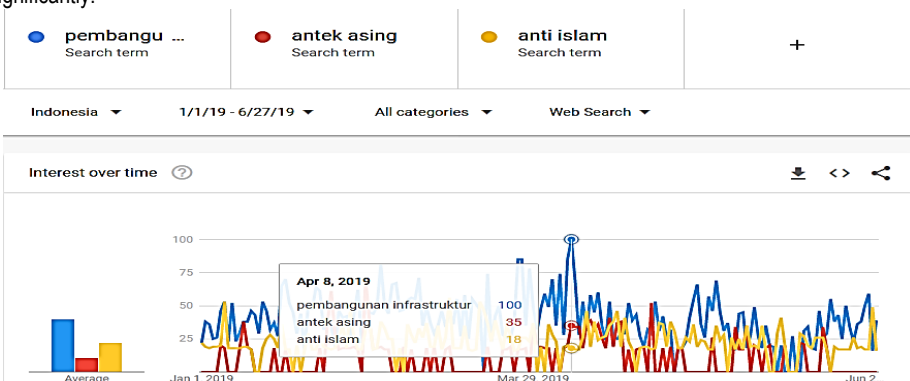


Figure 4. Trends comparison about positive and negative issue about Jokowi

The figure above shows about positive issue represented by the keywords “pembangunan infrastruktur” means “infrastructure build,” and the negative issue represented by “antek asing” means “foreign henchman” also keywords “anti-ulama” means “anti-Muslim preachers.” Both of these criteria are related to Jokowi as incumbent candidates of President. “Pembangunan infrastruktur” has bigger popularity points than keywords “antek asing”, which means that Indonesian people thought more logically than emotionally at that period. Moslems in Indonesia believed about the ideology of pluralism and humble with other religions is the key to maintain the unity of the nation.

Lubis et al. (Lubis et al.: 2009, pp. 51–60) In their study state that Islam is a religion that is believed to be a religion that has a universal, dynamic, and humanist nature. The dynamic of Islam emphasizes that Muslims should learn and expand their knowledge. Based on Al-Quran, in al-Mujadalah verse 11 explains that ALLAH SWT is pleased and happy with those who strive in learning to attain knowledge so that ALLAH SWT will raise their level (Lubis et al.: 2009, pp. 51–60). A sincere Muslim in seeking knowledge will get benefits and great virtues. They will always live in the true path of Islam and following the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. The verse also explains that knowledge has a respectable position in Islam. Obtaining knowledge will undergo certain processes and sometimes needs the effort to be achieved (El-Sheikh: 2003, pp. 1-50).

Erick Thohir, as the winning team of Jokowi, emphasizes the success of building infrastructure under the regime of Jokowi to raise Jokowi’s reputation. Infrastructure is the key point to develop economic growth, and this way is already implemented by other Asian countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, China, and Japan, and surpass uni-European countries in the global economy. Such a feat cannot be achieved without the good infrastructure to support international trade, as well as to persuade big enterprises to invest. Erick persuades society that Indonesia is full of natural resources and cultural product, but lack of infrastructure and facility to maintain trading activity between each region. The more infrastructure available in a region, the cheaper cost is needed for trading activity (Subadyo & Poerwoningsih: 2017, pp. 63–70).

The negative issues of Jokowi, such as antek asing/henchman of foreign and antek PKI/henchman of the communist party, have lower popularity points than the issue of building infrastructure. Those negative issues are usually used by the opponent’s team, especially by some group who did a black campaign during the presidential election period. Blak’s campaign emphasizes that Jokowi supports the communist party to be revived and how Muslims are restricted from performing religious practice. Another negative issue which is henchmen of foreign is used by the opponent’s team by claiming that in Jokowi’s regime, the number of nation’s loans is increased sharply and can cause the country’s asset sold to pay up the loan (Harymawan: 2018, pp. 2-18).



Figure 5. Trends about positive and negative issues of Prabowo

The figure above shows that the issues about Prabowo are not so popular rather than Jokowi. The highest popularity point is trends about "ijtima' ulama" which means "conference or forum of the ulama." Here conference means that Prabowo's team has to be consulted with the groups of ulama first, and ulama will decide how Prabowo's team should act in the presidential election based on the result of the discussion in the forum. Rizieq always emphasizes how important ijtima ulama is before deciding the strategy for the election. He claims that the pray from ulama can give the blessing for the candidates to win the election (Wanto & Sebastian: 2019, p. 28).

On those keywords, ijtima ulama has the biggest popularity points than the other two keywords. One of the reasons why people search for info about ijtima ulama because it is not only held for exclusive people but also for the public too. Ijtima ulama during the presidential election's event also be held in great reunion 212 at every 2 December. Great reunion 212 has a massive scale compared to other Islamic events but free for the public, as long as they are Muslims (Gunawan et al.: 2019, pp. 62–80). Susilowati et al. (Susilowati et al.: 2019, pp. 58–79) state in their research that the donation from supporting parties, as well as wealthy Muslim people all around Indonesia, provides participants of great reunion 212 provided with free food, transportation, and even with accommodation. There is no great reunion 212 without a speech from Rizieq Shihab, and even it was done by live video from Saudi Arabia, where Rizieq resides. Rizieq is the figure of the great reunion itself to give the sacred atmosphere of the event (Susilowati et al.: 2019, pp. 58–79).

## **DISCUSSION**

The rise of Indonesian Muslims' passion for upholding Islamic cultural practice, especially sharia, started when Muslims become united by preachers to join the great reunion 212 for the first time. Since that, many preachers have raised their name due to their contribution to that event and keep persuading Muslims to uphold Islamic cultural practice in Indonesia. Globalization disintegrates Muslims in Indonesia with the genuine cultural practice of Islam create a sense of longing for that culture. Globalization force society to mingle with the superior culture of modern countries (Hadiz: 2019, pp. 271–290).

Schreiter (Schreiter: 2019, pp. 40–64) in his study states that globalization can create a diaspora not only about local cultural practices but also religion. Globalization pushes the culture of the modern country, which becomes the leader of the global economy, such as the USA, China, South Korea, and Japan, to be adopted by other countries (Schreiter: 2019, pp. 40–64). Moreover, the demands of goods and financial products from leading countries force society from other countries to be immersed in their culture unconsciously. Slowly, the local cultures will be degraded and can be perished along with the decreasing number of their followers and artists (Hudiyanto & Hadi: 2019, pp. 115-121).

Ijtima ulama is good to strengthen the unity of Muslims in Indonesia. But it is recognized as bad by non-Muslim because, truthfully, ijtima ulama is held to take down Ahok as the candidate of Governor of Jakarta. Moreover, because of the ijtima ulama, many Muslims have negative opinions about Chinese ethnicity in Indonesia and kept insult them. Berman & Iannaccone (Berman & Iannaccone: 2005), in their research, states that religion has good and bad effects depend on the imam or leader that led his/her followers (Berman & Iannaccone: 2005).

The positive issue of Prabowo is the program of OK OCE has not gotten any massive attention in that period; even that program can be able to become a winning strategy in the governor election of Jakarta in 2017. OK OCE is a good program to develop amateur entrepreneurs without spending much money (Murwani: 2018, pp. 113–121). OK OCE becomes the mainstay of Prabowo to enhance the economic development of Indonesia by increasing the number of entrepreneurs so that the product of Indonesia can be exported overseas. But such ideas are not too popular on the internet. There are only a few people who are interested and search for information about OK OCE more details (Santi & Basit, 2019: pp. 263-266).

Khilafah, as a negative issue of Prabowo has low popularity points, despite that Islam is the biggest religion in Indonesia. Indonesian Muslims are thinking more logically than emotionally about deciding to take action based on the name of religion. One of the reasons because Muslims in Indonesia have been immersed by the ideology of pluralism and tolerance by Pancasila. Different from middle east Muslims who are still trapped with internal conflict by the name of religion, Muslims in Indonesia let the Indonesia Ulama Council or MUI and government take care of the situation rather than take over the problem by themselves (Prihatini, 2019, pp. 1–23).

Karl Marx states that religion can become an opiate for society. But it does not mean that religion is dangerous and forbidden. Instead, religion can become malignant for society if it is too much misused (McLennan: 2019, pp. 72–86). The true essence of religion is to educate society to be more humane and tolerant. But if a political interest mixed with religion, the religion will become the shield of that interest without considering the correct rule of religion anymore (Diken & Laustsen: 2019, pp. 111-131).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results above, it can be concluded that popularity trends of positive issues of Jokowi are higher than the negative ones. Positive issue of Jokowi, pembangunan infrastruktur/infrastructure build is higher in popularity points than two negative issues. The positive issue of Prabowo, which is the OK OCE program is lower than the negative issue. Moreover, the popular point of Rizieq is far higher than Erick in terms of information search on the internet. Islam as a major religion in Indonesia is the reason why the popular point of Rizieq is bigger than Erick. Ijtima ulama has the biggest popularity points than the other two issues related to Prabowo as presidential candidates. Great reunion 212 every year boost up the popularity of ijtimia ulama, so that more internet users want to search for information related to ijtimia ulama.

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