

The failure of the old islamic parties in Indonesian election: a study of the Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP) 2019-2024

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to explore the trend of declining votes for Islamic parties in contemporary Indonesia, both at the national and local levels. In particular, it examines the failure of the Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP) in the 2024 elections. Some perspectives argue that the defeat of Islamic parties in Indonesia stems from their inability to adapt their ideological platforms, internal factionalism, and identity crises. Other views suggest that shifts in the ideological orientation of Islamic voters, who increasingly favor nationalist parties over Islamic parties, have also contributed to their electoral decline. This study employs a qualitative method with a sociological institutionalism approach, arguing that empirical sociological conditions played a decisive role in shaping the defeat of Islamic parties in the 2024 election. At least seven factors contributed to the failure of long-established Islamic parties to secure the support of Muslim voters. Chief among these was prolonged internal conflict, while additional factors included leadership crises, weak coordination and communication between central and regional legislative candidates, the loss of charismatic figures, misaligned endorsements of presidential and vice-presidential candidates, campaign strategies that failed to appeal to young voters, and inadequate financial and logistical resources.

Keywords: electoral democracy, old Islamic parties, sociological institutionalism approach

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Introduction

This article explores the development of democracy in Indonesia, regarding the decline of Islamic political parties as our focus to find the main problems. We divide it into two groups of Islamic parties, namely the Old Islamic Party and the New Islamic Party. The Old Islamic Party referred to is the party inherited from the New Order, while the New Islamic Party is the Islamic party founded in the reform era. Political scientists have conducted in-depth research. Various findings have been written into articles in world-renowned journals, although previously many have studied the decline of Islamic parties in Indonesia. For example, a study by (Tanuwidjaja, 2010) found evidence of the decline of Islamic parties after the Soeharto government. According to him, Islam still plays an important role, but it is not at the central point in Indonesian politics. In his study, he found evidence that Indonesian voters have become "rational" and religion no longer influences their voting behavior. The decline of Islamic party voters can be interpreted as the decline of Islamic politics, which is marked by the penetration of Islamic voters into nationalist, secular, and Pancasila-based political parties, even making them stronger in competing against Islamic parties, which are no longer the only channel for Islamic aspirations.

Although Islamic political parties have experienced a decline in voter support, the rise of political Islam is very strong, suggesting a paradox between political Islam and Islamic political parties in Indonesia (Wanto, 2012). If on the one hand, support for Islamic political parties decreases, on the other hand, the level of intolerance and the number of sharia-based regional regulations have increased. Then in the study it can be concluded that Islamic politics and Islamic political parties are not always in line. This has been reinforced by Umam & Junaidi (2014). The phenomenon of religious conservatism in Indonesia in the public sector continues to grow. However, this trend is not followed by an increase in the popularity of Islamic politics. Islamic political parties are often abandoned by their sympathizers for several reasons. Some fundamental reasons are the inability to change the ideology in the political platform, internal grouping, and identity crisis.

The same opinion is also supported by Romli (2020), written in an article titled "Electoral Power Structure of Islamic Parties in the Reform Era in Indonesia". He explained his findings regarding Islamic political parties in the Reform era grew rapidly beyond the period of parliamentary democracy, but in electoral contests in the Reform era, Islamic political parties did not get enough votes. The votes obtained by Islamic parties tended to decrease from election to election. There are several factors that have caused Islamic parties to fail to gain support from Muslims. First, Islamic parties are fragmented and there is internal conflict. Second, Muslim voters make changes in their ideological orientation that no longer choose Islamic parties but nationalist parties. Third, nationalist parties accommodate the aspirations of Muslims by forming Islamic mass organizations. Fourth, there is a crisis of Islamic party leadership. Fifth, there is the absence of a real party program. To improve the electorate, Islamic parties must pay attention to programs to improve people's welfare, do democratization, eradicate corruption, and ensure social justice. Islamic party leaders must be role models, visionary, have integrity, and ingrained in society.

The findings of research results Romli (2020) regarding the factors that caused Islamic parties to fail to gain support from Islamic voters are different from (Aclandea et al., 2024). This is because they portrayed the failure of Islamic parties from a different perspective. In their research, they found several factors, including: (1) the public does not yet understand that choosing an Islamic party is an obligation of their religious law; (2) Islamic parties do not give the impression of law in their struggle movements; (3) there is an understanding that states that elections are a pagan system, so that it is forbidden to follow them; (4) non-Islamic parties appear Islamic, especially in terms of rituals and social charity; and (5) there is synergy and a 'snowball effect' between the people's ideology and secular power, which needs to be examined by Islamic political parties.

A different perspective was presented by Nurjaman (2023) in his article titled "*The Decline of Islamic Parties and the Dynamics of the Party System in the Post-Suharto Era in Indonesia*." He argues that the decline of Islamic parties was driven by the dynamics of the party system in the post-Suharto era, changes in party and electoral regulations, and the shift of political power from parties to individual candidates. In subsequent elections, many parties recruited prominent cadres, which transformed electoral competition from being party-centered to candidate-centered, both within and beyond the party structure.

In this study we ask an important question. Why did the majority of Muslim voters in Indonesia, the old Islamic party, the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP), fail to gain the support of Muslim voters? This research question has been partially answered by

Fernando et al., (2023). According to them, this could happen because the Islamic party is in the process of regeneration and the ideology of Islamic political parties is weakening, so that they do not have a comprehensive exploration of the loss of their existence. The challenges after the 2024 election for Islamic parties are getting tougher, especially since of the four Islamic parties, one of them did not qualify to win a parliamentary seat in Senayan, namely the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP). Some political scientists say that only the Prosperous Justice Party among the Indonesian Islamic parties still has a bright future Zulian (2024) because of the loyalty of its support base. The PKS Islamic ideology inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was developed for a further purpose, namely establishing an Islamic state in Indonesia and encouraging the Islamization of society in Indonesia.

A study by Fox & Menchik (2023) revealed that Islamic political parties and election campaigns in Indonesia, and many other studies have sharpened the findings and enriched the literature. They argued that the urban middle class is more likely to support Islamic politicians than rural agricultural workers. Indonesia has a large number of candidates from parties with nationalist, Muslim democratic, and Islamist ideological bases, and the divisions between these ideologies are prominent among voters and elites.

Therefore, this article explains the findings from three months in the field as well as examines in-depth the symptoms of declining public interest in Islamic parties in Indonesia in general, specifically explaining the failure of the PPP to win parliamentary seats and what factors influenced the decline in PPP votes in the 2024 election. This is field research with a qualitative method and a case study approach. The theoretical framework of 'sociological institutionalism' was chosen to explain the influence of the social context on the behavior of party elites. Thus, this article can answer questions from political scientists regarding the failure of old Islamic parties in the 2024 election.

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study used a qualitative method with a case study approach to answer the questions raised in the study. The qualitative method was chosen because this method is able to reveal the meaning, development, structure, behavior, and relationships between individuals in order to identify shifts in voter behavior, especially among Muslim voters in Indonesia and to explore descriptive information.

In addition, to understand the behavior of Islamic voters in the context of the general election, this study used the "Sociological Institutionalism" approach. This approach involved three stages; searching for data sources regarding PPP, collecting data on PPP, and analyzing data on PPP. First, it described the recruitment model and cadre system in filling the PPP management. Second, it identified the shift in behavior towards the political choices of Muslims towards PPP in the 2024 election. Third, it analyzed the dynamics of PPP politics after the reform by examining the party's internal conflict regarding PPP's vote acquisition in the 2024 election and the previous election.

Why did electoral support for PPP decline in the reform era elections? What are the factors that caused PPP to fail to reach the majority of Muslim voters? This study explains the research findings in depth by presenting a mapping of the PPP's vote acquisition in each election in the reform era, as well as the political activities and dynamics of political actors in PPP. Before discussing this problem, we found a common thread about the social context of the shift in voter behavior as a framework for thinking. Then we devised a new institutional theory to analyze the research findings with a sociological institutionalism approach as in the following diagram.

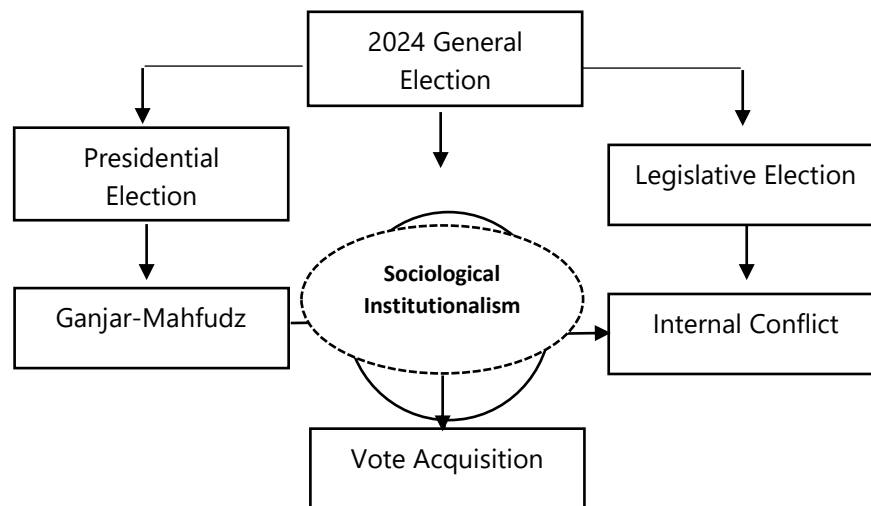


Figure 1. Sociological institutionalism approach
Source: processed by authors

Results and Discussion

Old Islamic Parties

This study refers to several Islamic political parties, with particular attention to those categorized as “old” Islamic parties. In the post-Reformasi era, at least four Islamic parties contested the national elections. For analytical clarity, we classified them into two groups: old Islamic parties and new Islamic parties. The classification is based on the parties’ historical origins and their electoral performance, as reflected in the number of votes they received. The old Islamic parties are the parties inherited from the New Order, while the new Islamic parties are Islamic parties established during the reform era. Although many Islamic parties were established during the reform era, we chose Islamic parties with votes that could win parliamentary seats. The old Islamic party group is *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP), while the new Islamic parties include *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PKB), *Partai Amanat Nasional* (PAN), and *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS).

We would like to begin the explanation from the historical aspect of the PPP party which was marked by the birth of the New Order government. The fall of President Soekarno (Old Order) was then replaced by President Soeharto (New Order). Muslims hoped that the power of Islam would return to the national political stage. In this context, modernist Muslims have a desire to rehabilitate Masyumi, which was dissolved by Soekarno during guided democracy. In that context, then on December 16, 1965, the Muslim Coordinating Body was formed, consisting of 16 Islamic organizations. So they lobbied the government and issued a statement about the need for Masyumi party rehabilitation. Of course, the desire to rehabilitate Masyumi party was banned by the government. This certainly disappointed Islamic circles, especially Modernist Islamic circles. With the ban, the initiators then tried to form another Islamic political party. Thus, the Parmusi Party was formed. The government allowed Parmusi to be established. This was because the government saw that the existing Islamic parties (NU, PSII, and Perti) had not accommodated modernists, because NU and Perti were traditionally oriented and PSII, although modernist oriented, was less well known.

With the establishment of a number of Islamic parties, and in a number of political policies, the New Order government carried out reorganization and

refunctionalization, both at the level of the political superstructure and political infrastructure. This policy was intended to create political stability as a foundation for the implementation of economic development. For the New Order government, political stability was a prerequisite for the implementation of development. Development could be implemented if there was political stability. In this regard, the steps taken by the New Order were the simplification (fusion) of political parties, so that the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP) was born.

PPP is an old Islamic political party in Indonesia. This party was officiated on January 5, 1973, in Jakarta. PPP was the result of a merger (fusion) of four Islamic political parties inherited from the Old Order government: *Partai Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), *Partai Syarikat Islam Indonesia* (PSII), *Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah* (Perti), and *Partai Muslimin Indonesia* (Parmusi) (Arifin Munawir, 2019). PPP is a reflection of the first Islamic politics in the New Order era. This party was founded in 1973, some sources say 1972 (Steenbrink, 1993). By forcibly merging four parties based on Islam, PPP became the only party that consistently raised the aspirations of Muslims.

During the New Order, this Islamic party always held a good position in every general election, with Golkar as the winner of the title of "best party" based on the vote counts (Basyaib, 1999). In addition, the presence and existence of PPP as an Islamic political party during the New Order was seen as an effort to eliminate the very strong flow of politics during the Old Order. According to Ali (1996), the existence of PPP provides a sign of the uniqueness of the Indonesian political world: the continuation of the pre-New Order political world. The party stand is more on the similarity of the political culture and not on clear programs, which bind followers cross-culturally.

From this merger, in the 1977 Election, PPP's votes reached 29.29%. However, in subsequent elections, PPP's vote acquisition continued to decline. This was not only the result of intimidation, manipulation, and engineering in every election, but also the result of the ideological changes experienced by PPP and the internal conflicts of PPP itself. The ideological changes that occurred were changes in PPP's principles from being based on Islam to being based on Pancasila, followed by changes in its symbol from the Kaaba to the Star (Haris, 1991).

The collapse of the New Order government by the reform movement caused a chaotic political map in Indonesia, where the transitional reform government emerged. Various initiatives by reform figures and religious figures wanted to establish political parties. The establishment of political parties mushroomed at the beginning of the reform, both political parties based on Pancasila and political parties with Islamic principles. PPP remained consistent as an Islamic party by changing the principles and symbols by the elites who initiated this party. Due to various considerations from the elite, this party changed its principles and symbols from the principles of Pancasila to the principles of Islam and from the Star symbol to the symbol of the Kaaba.

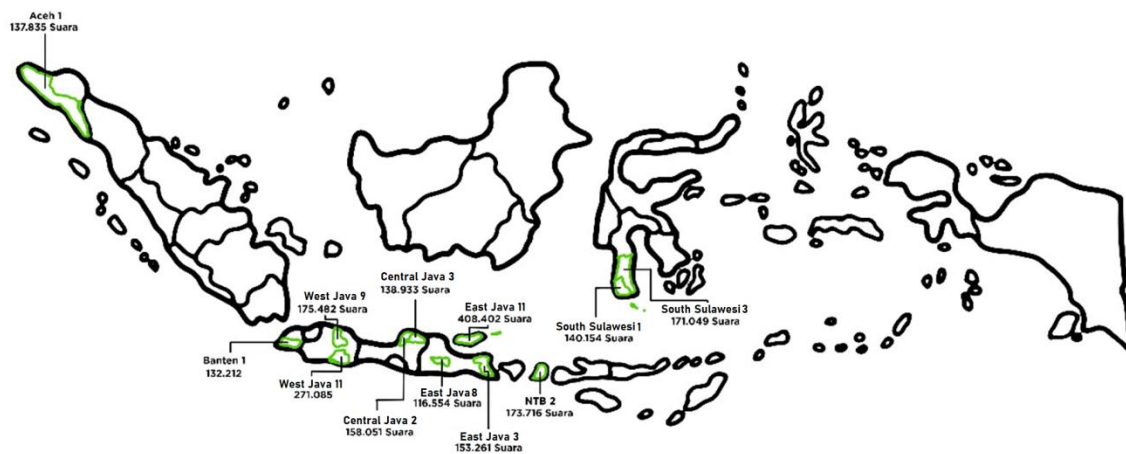
Along with the dynamics of political parties during the reform era, PPP experienced ups and downs in vote acquisition from election to election. In the 1999 election, it gained 11,329,905 votes or 10.71 percent, gaining 58 seats. In the 2004 election, it acquired 9,226,444 votes or 8.16 percent and 58 seats. This vote acquisition was the fourth highest at that time. In the 2009 election, PPP experienced a decrease in the number of votes to 5,544,332 or 5.33 percent and 38 seats. In the 2014 election, it attained 8,157,488 votes or 6.53 percent and 39 seats. In the 2019 election, it gained 6,323,147 votes or 4.52 percent and 19 seats. In the 2024 election, it achieved 5,878,777 votes or 3.87 percent (General Election Commission). The following is a table of PPP vote acquisition from the 1999-2024 elections.

Table 1. *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan's Election Gains from 1999-2024*

No.	Time of the General Election	Votes Obtained	Percentage
1.	1999 General Election	11,329,905 Votes	10.71%
2.	2004 General Election	9,226,444 Votes	8.16%
3.	2009 General Election	5,544,332 Votes	5.33%
4.	2014 General Election	8,157,488 Votes	6.53%
5.	2019 General Election	6,323,147 Votes	4.52%
6.	2024 General Election	5,878,777 Votes	3.87%

Source: General Election Commission, 2024

The PPP's vote acquisition in each election was uneven. The largest vote contribution that had been obtained was still concentrated on the island of Java, namely Banten, West Java, Central Java, and East Java, and several other islands such as Kalimantan only contributed a small number of votes so that the vote acquisition in Kalimantan could not compete with other parties. The rest of the PPP's votes were obtained from Aceh, NTB, and South Sulawesi. The following is a map of the distribution of PPP votes in the 2024 election as shown in the following map of Indonesia:

**Figure 2.** Map of the PPP Vote Distribution in the 2024 Election

Source: processed by author

The open proportional election system has significantly contributed to the occurrence of internal conflicts in Islamic political parties. Every time an election approaches, Islamic political parties must deal with tight competition. The internal competition does not trigger advancement, but instead it makes it weak. The unilateral incident carried out by Suryadharma Ali (SDA) in taking party policies until there was dualism in leadership at that time, resulted in the electability of the PPP's votes decreasing to the parliamentary threshold in the 2019 election. In the last 20 years, the internal conflict of the PPP has had an impact and influenced the acquisition of votes in every election from 1999-2019. The number of votes and the number of PPP seats has decreased significantly. This conflict confirms that there are clear factions from several elements that form a fusion within PPP and, the differences in views of the elite of this political party cause conflicts of interest from the two elements (Romli, 2017). Based on the driving factors for the birth of internal conflict in the PPP, there are classifications of conflicts, namely, conflicts that arise due to differences in political interests and conflicts that occur because of differences in the backgrounds of the cadres. In the context of political parties, this is a fact because the tendency of parties is to be factional not fused (Nurdin et al., 2019).

The same internal conflict cases also happened to the new Islamic parties: PKB, PAN, and PKS. PKB at the beginning of the reformation was also shaken by this internal party conflict, such as the Gus Dur-Matori Abdul Jalil conflict, the Gus Dur-Alwi Shihab conflict, and the Gus Dur-Muhaimin Iskandar conflict, resulting in PKB's vote acquisition plummeting in the 2009 election, as PKB's vote total was only 5,146,122 or 4.94 percent. The same thing was experienced by PAN, namely the conflict with Amin Rais, the founder of this party, which was marked by the resignation of Ahmad Hanafi Rais (Amin Rais' eldest son) as deputy chairperson of PAN 2020-2025, but PAN's internal conflict did not affect PAN's vote acquisition in the 2024 election. Likewise, the PKS internal conflict between two camps, namely the Anis Matta and Fahri Hamzah camps with their seniors such as the founder of PKS; Yusuf Supendi, the Deputy Chairperson of the Syuro Council; Hidayat Nur Wahid (HNW), the Chairperson of the Syuro Council Salim Segaf Al-Jufri; and Sohibul Iman, the President of PKS, but the internal conflict of PKS soon ended since the Anis Matta and Fahri Hamzah camps founded the Indonesian People's Wave (Gelora) party.

Why are Religion-based Parties Less Popular?

Historically, various studies have traced the history of political parties in various parts of the world and have found that religious-based parties are often found in Western Europe, Southern Europe, and Eastern Europe, even reaching West Asia and South Asia, such as in Israel, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and even Southeast Asia such as Indonesia and several secular countries in Europe such as the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and Türkiye.

In the history of political parties in Indonesia, the presence of religious-based political parties has been recorded as an inevitability that cannot be avoided. The existence of religious-based political parties stems from the theological support of religion itself which states that establishing political parties is justified in religion and is legitimate, religious-based political parties are a binding factor for these religious groups, and by establishing parties based on the same religion, leaders and followers feel more comfortable (Sumartana, 1999). In the viewpoint of religion, commands or prohibitions that come from religious teachings are all true and moral. They apply not only to religious adherents but also to everyone, including people outside the religion.

In Indonesia, religious-based political parties are dominated by Islamic parties because the majority of the population adheres to Islam. The beginning of the formation of Islamic parties began with the establishment of the Islamic Trade Union which later developed into the Islamic Union. It then changed to *Partai Syarikat Islam Indonesia* (PSII) which also participated in fighting for the Indonesian people's struggle to expel colonialism. When Indonesia became independent, Islamic groups formed the Masyumi Party as the only forum for the aspirations of Muslims. Unfortunately, due to internal conflicts, other Islamic parties emerged such as: the *Nahdlatul Ulama* Party (NU), the *Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah* (Perti), the *Partai Persatuan Tharikhah Islam* (PPTI), and *Angkatan Kemenangan Umat Islam* (AKUI) (Romli, 2020).

Since the regime change from the Old Order to the New Order, precisely after the 1971 election, President Soeharto began to look for ways to merge the number of political parties as a representation of each group, namely the Islamic group and the nationalist group. The Islamic group was represented by the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP) and the nationalist group was represented by *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* (PDI). On January 5, 1973, four Islamic parties: the *Nahdlatul Ulama* Party (NU), Parmusi, PSII, and Perti merged into the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP).

Later, this merger represented the strength of PPP as a party that could unite various Islamic movements and groups. Therefore, PPP's claim as the "Great House of the Islamic Community" is currently quite understandable. PPP, an Islamic party, is committed to achieving the goals outlined in the August 17th, 1945 declaration (Apriliasti, 2015).

Entering the reform era marked by the change of the New Order regime under President Soeharto, on May 21, 1998, due to strong political pressure, Soeharto declared his resignation from the presidency. This was a sign that a new chapter had begun from an authoritarian regime to a more democratic regime. The reformation has brought a breath of fresh air to the democratization process in Indonesia, marked by the freedom to express aspirations through demonstrations, freedom of the press, social control over the government, and the birth of new parties, including the establishment of a party with Islamic nuances. The reformation period is a transition period towards democracy. The establishment of parties is a symptom of political euphoria from the grip of the previous regime because constitutionally and institutionally the parties will fill the process towards democracy, although in the early stages of the transition in Indonesia, political parties may only have a small share or no role at all.

In this reform era, the establishment of political parties mushroomed. The General Election Commission as the organizer of the General Election noted that there were 141 political parties that had been established but only 48 political parties were able to participate in the election, and 20 of them were political parties with Islamic nuances. This Islamic party was born as a kind of reincarnation of Islamic parties participating in the 1955 election. But in the 1999 election, this reincarnation gave rise to various new fragmentations because from each of these parties new kinds of factions emerged, with each faction establishing its own party in the reform era, such as in the Masyumi, NU, PSII, Perti, and PPTI parties.

We classified PPP as the embodiment of the old Islamic party, being the only party inherited from the New Order government that consistently (continues to) use the name and emphasize Islamic symbols to remain a party with a mass base of Muslims while the other two, such as *Golongan Karya* (Golkar) changed to the Golkar Party and the *Partai demokrasi Indonesia* (PDI) changed to *Partai demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (PDIP).

Since its founding, PPP has led this party, including seven general chairpersons, namely H. Mohammad Syafa'at Mintaredja who led PPP as the first general chairperson from 1973 to 1978. Then there were Djaelani Naro (1978–1984 and 1984–1989), Ismail Hassan Metareum (1989–1994 and 1994–1999), Hamzah Haz (1998–2003 and 2003–2007), Suryadharma Ali (2007–2011 and 2011–2014), Muhammad Romahurmuziy (2016–2019 and 2019–2020), and Suharso Monoarfa (2019–2020 and 2020–2022). However, along with the internal dynamics of the party with the Kaaba logo, Suharso Monoarfa was removed as the PPP General Chairperson in 2022 by the leadership of the Sharia Council, Honorary Council, and Advisory Council of PPP DPP members. Muhammad Mardiono served as the interim PPP DPP Chairperson for the remaining two years of his term in 2020-2025.

In the 2024 election, PPPs vote acquisition experienced a very sharp decline, only gaining 5,878,777 votes or 3.87% (General Election Commission, 2024). When compared to the previous elections, for example, the 1999 election gained 11,329,905 votes, the 2004 election had 9,248,764 votes, the 2009 election obtained 5,533,214 votes, the 2014 election earned 8,157,488 votes, and the 2019 election had 6,323,147

votes. From the current vote acquisition results, PPP's votes are certain not to get legislative representation in parliament because they do not meet the parliamentary threshold requirements determined by the election regulations.

Religious-based parties in previous studies in various countries, such as Alberto Giorgi with his research in Italy, found that the legacy of the Christian Democratic Party is oriented towards religion in Italy. The "Catholic" vote remains an important factor in the consolidation of the stability of democracy in the second Italian republic even though church attendance has decreased and secularization has increased in the country (Giorgi, 2013). Likewise, in a study by Juan Pablo Luna, Felipe Monestier, and Fernando Rosenblatt in Chile, they discovered that religious-oriented parties can outperform other parties even though there has been an increase in secularization (Luna et al., 2013).

A fundamental problem that is interesting to conduct research on for political scientists is why in Indonesia, religious-based parties are less popular with religious adherents themselves. Nancy L. Rosenblum's research from Harvard University on religious and ethnic-based parties in Europe and Türkiye shows that the emergence of religious and ethnic-based parties into the political arena has helped to consolidate the democratic regime. The need to compete in elections has changed the character of religious and ethnic groups from opposing the government and being sectarian, to supporting democracy and recognizing pluralism (Rosenblum, 2003), although sometimes certain countries use religion as a commodity by political parties that perform poorly (Santoso, 2010).

This fact then received resistance from anti-religious or non-religious groups on religious support for democracy and pluralism which was marked by the rampant practice of secularization which resulted in the erosion of interest in religious groups. (Davie, 2023) study on secularization in Western Europe and Eastern Europe conducted a historical analysis that Europe (39 countries) has become the continent with the most Christians in the world, but the region experienced a sharp decline in its Christian affiliation between 1970 and 2020. The Christian population of 87.7% decreased to 70.8%, which resulted in the emergence of non-religious self-identification (atheist and/or agnostic). However, a large number of Europeans still identify with their church even though they do not believe or practice their religion. An interesting phenomenon is that the Muslim population is growing significantly due to immigration, while the Jewish population continues to decline (Davie, 2023).

The decline in the religious population in various Western, Southern, and Northern European countries is the opposite with countries in Eastern Europe. In Eastern Europe, there was a significant increase in the emergence of self-identification from non-religious Christian affiliates between 1970-2020, as the increase in followers reached 84.2% from 57%. The impact of the increase in the religious population resulted in an increase of Christian parties in Eastern Europe, although various studies of religious-based parties in Eastern Europe showed that religious parties did not experience a significant increase. From this data, it shows that the role of religion in religious-based parties has no influence (Davie, 2023). In the perspective of secularization, the role of religion has completely disappeared from the public sphere. The role of religion has become increasingly irrelevant in politics and social society due to the progress of modernization. Even after the era of the rise of the role of religion in politics throughout the world in the late twentieth century, many social scientists have dwindled in number, even becoming limited to the eighties (Lawrence, 1989).

In Indonesia, according to data from the Population and Civil Registration Office of the Ministry of Home Affairs, 87.08 percent or 245,973,915 people are Muslim, 7.40 percent or 20,911,697 people are Christian, and 3.07 percent or 8,667,619 people are Catholic. Then Hindu people comprise 1.68 percent or 4,744,543 people, Buddhist people make up 0.71 percent or 2,004,352 people, Confucian adherents amount to 0.03 percent or 76,636 people, and adherents of traditional beliefs are 0.03 percent or 98,822 people. The total population of Indonesia as of the first period 1 of 2024 is 282,477,584 people. Meanwhile, there are four Islamic-based parties, namely the Old Islamic Party; the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP), and three of them are new Islamic parties; *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PKB), the *Partai Amanat Nasional* (PAN), and the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS). The vote acquisition of each Islamic party in the 2024 election is as follows:

Table 2. Votes Obtained by Islamic Parties in the 2024 General Election

No.	Name of the Islamic Party	Votes Obtained	Percentage
1.	<i>Partai Persatuan Pembangunan</i> (PPP)	5,878,777 votes	3.87%
2.	<i>Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa</i> (PKB)	16,115,655 votes	10.61%
3.	<i>Partai Amanat Nasional</i> (PAN)	10,984,003 votes	7.23%
4.	<i>Partai Keadilan Sejahtera</i> (PKS)	12,781,353 votes	8.42%

Source: General Election Commission

In examining Table 2, the total number of votes for Islamic parties amounts to only 45,759,788, or about 30.13 percent of Indonesia's 204,807,222 voters. Although Muslims form the majority of the population, Islamic parties do not receive electoral support proportional to this demographic dominance. Rather than winning the election, these parties lost votes to national or non-religious parties. The relatively strong support Islamic parties enjoyed in the 1999 and 2004 elections could not be sustained in 2024. In subsequent elections, their vote share has continued to decline, even though the number of Islamic parties was smaller compared to 1999. As reflected in Table 2, this pattern provides clear evidence that religion-based parties (Islamic parties, in this case) are less appealing to Muslim voters.

Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim majority in the world. More than 87% of them are Muslims, almost as many Muslims living in Indonesia as the entire Arabic-speaking world combined (Gade, 2004). The majority of Muslims in Indonesia are Sunni Muslims, while about one million Indonesians are Shia Muslims. There are also various other forms of Islam, including a large number of Sufi communities (Bruinessen, 2020). However, most of the adherents of Islam are dominated by Islamic *santri* and Islamic *abangan*. Islamic *santri* adhere to orthodox forms of Islam, while Islamic *abangan* practice a more syncretic version of Islam (Geertz, 1997).

In a survey by Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC) in March 2023, 52.4% of the respondents claimed to be *santri*, 22.3% *abangan*, and 1.4% *priyayi*. By looking at the results of the SMRC survey, more than half of the voters claimed to be *santri*; however, this group of *santri* did not immediately choose an Islamic party. Various contemporary political studies have found that there has been a shift in the political choices of Islamic *santri* from Islamic parties to nationalist parties. This shows that Islamic *santri* can already distinguish between religious and political authority, meaning that if there are problems related to religious law or religious rituals they are more inclined to choose religious figures (*Ulama*) or *kiai* as references, while political choices are independent and autonomous and cannot be influenced by any religious figure. Various interviews were conducted in this study. They (*santri*) choose because of

their performance, for example. They choose because they see their track record, see their platform, or examine the policy proposals given by the party.

On the other hand, although currently there are fewer *abangan* Muslims than *santri* Muslims, the influence of *abangan* Islamic votes remains significant in nationalist political parties. The *abangan* Islamic group is adherent to them (nationalist political parties). While *santri* Islam is divided as *santri* not only choose Islamic parties but also choose nationalist parties. From an in-depth analysis of the literature on political parties, (Ozzano & Cavatorta, 2013) obtained a typology of religiously oriented parties which is a useful guide to understanding their nature, their organizational models, and most importantly, how they can influence democracy and democratization. Ozzano and Cavatorta's contribution categorizes five types of religiously oriented parties, with various organizational and ideological features: conservative, progressive, fundamentalist, religious nationalist, and camp types (Ozzano & Cavatorta, 2013).

The next question in this study is whether secularization in Indonesia has an effect on Muslims in choosing Islamic parties and Nationalist parties, as an important note in previous studies that political secularization is closely related to discussions about the relationship between Islam and the state. In Indonesia, the pattern of relations between Islam and the state always experiences an ebb and flow depending on the prevailing social and political conditions. However, in general, the pattern of this relationship tends to be mutual antagonism and distrust (Effendy, 2003). At the discourse level, this attitude of mutual distrust and suspicion is a real form of struggle of thought around the boundaries between the realm of religion (Islam) and the state (politics) (Rachman, 2010). The debate about the relationship between Islam and the state continues to develop in such a way and narrows down to more technical problems such as ideology, the form of the Indonesian state, the Constitution, the election of heads of state or regions, and so on.

Several factors that have contributed to the poor performance of Islamic parties and examined their future trajectories by considering the following trends: Islamic parties are not the primary choice for Muslims in Indonesia; although all Islamic parties seek to uphold Islamic teachings, their goals are fragmented; and there is a gap between voters' religious ideology and political loyalty (Zulian, 2024). Zulian findings reinforce the fact that there are still many party cadres and elites involved in corruption cases, for example in PKS, the corruption case in the procurement of beef imports that ensnared PKS president Lutfi Hasan Ishak (LHI). PKB has several cadres and ministers who have been involved in corruption cases, for example the Minister of Sports in the Jokowi era, namely Imam Nahrawi in the KONI grant fund case. Several PAN cadres have also been attached to corruption cases and just as interesting is the corruption case in PPP which involved its two general chairpersons, namely Suryadharma Ali (SDA) and Romahurmuzi (Romy). SDA was connected to corruption related to hajj funds, while Romy was part of a case of buying and selling positions in the Ministry of Religion. This fact reveals that the image of a party based on religion (Islam) in the eyes of the public is no different from other nationalist parties that do not reflect the party's vision and mission.

PPP's Failure in the 2024 General Election

The recent 2024 Indonesian legislative elections have raised questions about the future of Islamic political parties. The last strong showing by Islamic parties was in the 1955 elections, after which they slowly declined. Islamic parties are now on the fringes of the country's political scene, second-rate to nationalist-secular parties. Only the

Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB) and the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) were able to increase their vote shares in the 2024 elections. The others, like the *Partai Amanat Nasional* (PAN) were only able to maintain their previous election results and, most tragically, the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP) failed to secure a parliamentary seat.

The failure of PPP could have been predicted beforehand. Several political scientists had predicted that PPP's vote acquisition would decline. From the results of a survey conducted before the election began, several survey institutions such as Indikator and Litbang Kompas had released survey results in December 2023 with surprising results. PPP's vote acquisition had been predicted to fail to meet the parliamentary threshold because it was less than 4 percent. Until the general election was held in February 2024, not a single survey institution released signs that PPP's vote acquisition would increase in the 2024 election. On the contrary, PPP's votes actually decreased sharply.

This study has found several factors that have contributed to PPP's failure to enter parliament, including internal party conflict, leadership crisis, poor communication in campaign cooperation between regional and central legislative candidates, the loss of charismatic figures as a magnet for rallying votes, elite egocentrism towards support for the 2024 presidential candidate, the failure of strategies to rally young voters such as from the Gen-Z group, and minimal financial-logistics support from the party in the campaign.

First, there were internal party conflict factors. PPP's vote acquisition experienced a sharp decline when compared to the first election vote acquisition in 1999 after the reform. This was inseparable from the shock of internal conflict within the party. Differences of opinion among elites could not be resolved to be amenable to everyone, so that the conflict became worse. For example, in determining legislative candidates in the 2009 Election, there was a conflict between the General Chairperson, Suryadharma Ali (SDA), and the Secretary General, Irgan Chairul Mahfiz, because in compiling the list of PPP legislative candidates compiled by SDA, it was considered that they had no chance of winning the Legislative Election, so Irgan did not sign the candidacy documents. This action also resulted in Irgan's dismissal as PPP Secretary General (Nuridin et al., 2019).

The same thing also happened after the 2014 Election. An internal conflict emerged in PPP which split the party into two camps, namely the SDA camp as the PPP general chairperson supported by Djan Faridz, Fernita Darwis, Epyardi, and Dimyati Natakusuma in facing the Romahurmuziy (Rommy) camp. The PPP secretary general was supported by Emron Pangkapi, Suharso Monoarfa, Lukman Hakim Saefuddin, and Reni Marlinawati. The conflict in 2014 began with PPP's support for the Prabowo-Hatta pair in the 2014 Presidential Election. SDA's political move by attending the Gerindra campaign created differences of opinion within the party. The decision to support the presidential candidate in the 2014 Presidential Election was not yet fully unanimous within the PPP. The peak of this conflict resulted in dualism in leadership with the holding of two conferences, namely the Surabaya Conference which elected Romahurmuziy as the general chairperson and the SDA conference in Jakarta which appointed Djan Faridz as the general chairperson (Noor, 2016).

The internal conflict of PPP continued with the action of firing each other's management, each party claiming to be the most legitimate in making decisions. On one occasion, SDA fired Rommy. At the same time, the PPP DPP management held a daily meeting which recommended that a national leadership meeting be held. The

National Leadership Meeting also recommended the dismissal of SDA and the appointment of Emron Pangkapi (who was then the Deputy General Chairperson) as the Acting General Chairperson.

In 2016, the 8th PPP Congress was held in Jakarta. The result was that Romahurmuziy (Rommy) was elected as the general chairperson through consensus or acclamation. Several years later, in 2019 Rommy stumbled upon a corruption case caught by the Corruption Eradication Commission in Surabaya and was found guilty by the court. Then he was dismissed as the general chairperson of PPP DPP on March 16, 2019. The daily management meeting of PPP DPP decided to permanently dismiss Romy from his position as general chairperson of PPP DPP. In 2020, PPP held its 9th Congress in Makassar by appointing Soeharso Manoarfa as general chairperson for the 2020-2025 term. Before Soeharso's term of office ended, he was dismissed by the Sharia Council and the Honorary Council because he had caused a commotion due to controversial statements that had offended the NU *kiai*. So as his replacement, the acting general chairperson, H. Muhamad Mardiono, was appointed until 2025.

Internal party conflicts that cannot be managed well will become a time bomb for political parties on the verge of destruction. PPP did not learn from internal conflicts in PKB or other parties. When PKB experienced a very sharp conflict between Abdur Rahman Wahid (Gus Dur) and Muhaimin Iskandar (Cak Imin) in the 2009 election, PKB's votes plummeted by around 5 percent, meaning half of PKB's votes were lost due to internal conflicts, as well as other parties. As a result of the conflict, party consolidation would be hampered because the elites were only busy with individual egocentric problems, while the future of the party that concerns the interests of many people was buried due to prolonged conflict.

Second, there is the PPP leadership crisis factor. (Mujani & Liddle, 2014) showed that leadership is an important factor in influencing voter behavior, refuting the dominance of religious orientation in vote acquisition among Islamic parties in the post-Soeharto era in Indonesia. When Soeharso Manoarfa was dismissed as the elected general chairperson in the 9th Muktamar in Makassar by the Sharia Council and the Honorary Council, PPP DPP was taken over by Muhamad Mardiono as the acting general chairperson, during a period of three years. Mardiono was only appointed as the acting general chairperson in replacing Soeharso Manoarfa. Therefore, during the 2024 election PPP did not have a definitive general chairperson appointed by the highest forum, the Muktamar. So, in fact Mardiono did not have strong leadership legitimacy; besides that, Mardiono was not well known at the grassroots level.

Mardiono's leadership typology is not a transformational leader typology (*James MacGregor Burns - Transforming Leadership-Grove Press (2007), n.d.*) first introduced the concept of leadership transformation in his descriptive study of political leaders, but the term is now used in organizational psychology as well. According to Burns (1978), leadership transformation is a process in which "leaders and followers help each other to advance to higher levels of morale and motivation". The struggle relates to the difficulty in distinguishing between management and leadership and states that the difference lies in their nature and behavior. This kind of leadership role is not possessed by Mardiono, while the current need of PPP is a charismatic figure with a strong support base.

Third, there is the poor communication factor in collaborating between central and provincial legislative candidates and districts/cities. The vote acquisition of central and regional legislative candidates has a difference of 2.2 million votes. In a podcast on social media, the chairperson of the party's advisory council, Romahurmuzi, said that

the vote acquisition of legislative candidates at the central and regional levels had a fairly large difference. This requires standardization of party votes and will be used as evaluation material at the upcoming congress. The PPP congress will be accelerated as the highest forum to determine the general chairperson definitively and as an evaluation forum regarding the PPP's failure in the 2024 election to maintain parliamentary seats at the central level.

Masrohan Samsuri (Chairman of the Central Java PPP DPW) said:

"The communication between legislative candidates is very poor. Legislative candidates at the central and regional levels do not cooperate well, each fighting for themselves. The center is fighting for how to pass the DPR RI, while the regional legislative candidates only think about how they can pass to become the provincial/district DPRD, so that in one electoral district the vote acquisition is not synchronized. There are even regional legislative candidates who cooperate with legislative candidates from other parties (Interview, 12 November 2024)."

The 2024 Election, based on the data obtained during the research, consisted of 84 Electoral Districts and 580 seats provided by General Election Commission. PPP was only able to win in 12 Dapil, namely in Aceh 1, West Java 9, West Java 11, Central Java 2, Central Java 3, East Java 3, East Java 8, East Java 11, Banten 1, West Nusa Tenggara 2, South Sulawesi 1, and South Sulawesi 2. The following are PPP's vote acquisitions in 12 electoral districts along with the vote acquisitions of legislative candidates proposed in the 2024 election

Table 3. PPP and Legislative Candidates' Votes in Electoral Districts

No.	Name of Legislative Candidate	Election Region	Party Votes	Highest Legislative Candidate Votes
1.	Illiza Sa'adudin Djamal	Aceh 1	137,835 votes	111,389 votes
2.	Neng Siti Julaiha	Banten 1	132,212 votes	51,854 votes
3.	Pepep Saepul Hidayat	West Java 9	175,482 votes	110,573 votes
4.	Nurhayati Effendi	West Java 11	271,085 votes	69,007 votes
5.	Rojih	Central Java 2	158,051 votes	48,305 votes
6.	Arwani Thomafi	Central Java 3	138,933 votes	65,900 votes
7.	Sy Anas Tahir	East Java 3	153,261 votes	49,348 votes
8.	Ema Ummiyatul Chusnah	East Java 8	116,554 votes	65,393 votes
9.	Achmad Baidowi	East Java 11	408,402 votes	359,189 votes
10.	Ermalena	West Nusa Tenggara 2	173,716 votes	52,747 votes
11.	Amir Uskara	South Sulawesi 1	140,154 votes	94,287 votes
12.	Muh Aras	South Sulawesi 2	171,049 votes	101,938 votes

Source: processed from various sources

Fourth, there is the factor of the loss of charismatic figures as a magnet to obtain votes for the PPP Islamic ideology. As a note in this study, the PPP mass base still has a lot of support from traditional Islamic boarding schools that are still closely associated with Islamic symbols such as the Kaaba symbol or their senior clerics as figures who are obeyed; the relationship between clerics and students is a source of votes for PPP, but it becomes a problem for PPP. Traditional NU members of Islamic boarding schools are also the target of the PKB vote bank such as several Islamic boarding schools in East Java, so that the NU *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) votes are split into two, some to PPP because of several charismatic senior clerics such as KH Maemoen Zuber

(Sarang-Rembang), KH Alawi Muhamad (Madura), and several other clerics, and the others are given to PKB.

In the current condition, the traditional NU Islamic boarding schools display a different persona. NU Islamic boarding schools actively campaign for “an Islamic Nusantara”, traditional Islam with moderate Islamic characteristics, especially from the group of NU youths who tend to be critical and rationalist both in thinking and behavior. This group of NU youths is no longer bound and subject to the fatwa of the *kiai*. Several findings in previous research show interesting facts that NU *kiai* no longer play a central role in gaining support from NU members. In the case of Pamekasan Madura and Java, several regional head candidates supported by charismatic *kiai* were actually defeated by regional head candidates who were not supported by the local *kiai*.

Fifth, there is the factor of support for the presidential and vice presidential candidate pairs. In the 2024 election, through a press release, the acting general chairperson, Muhamad Mardiono DPP PPP, supported Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfudz MD as the presidential and vice presidential candidates. This support was not immediately approved by the party elites. Several young cadres such as the Ka’bah Youth Movement (GPK) which was driven by KH Wafi Maemun (son of KH Maemun Zuber) and several *kiai* in the regions openly supported the Anis Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar (AMIN) pair. The decision of DPP PPP to join PDIP in supporting Ganjar-Mahfudz was widely regretted by the PPP elites because the support was considered by the party elites to be unable to infiltrate the opinions of the ideological Islamic grassroots who were still strongly associated with symbolic Islamic symbols. AMIN was considered a representation of the candidate supported by the majority of Muslims.

This error in support greatly affected the PPP’s vote acquisition because Ganjar-Mahfudz did not have an impact on the coattail effect of the PPP’s vote acquisition. On the contrary, its impact was on PKB by placing its general chairperson as a vice presidential candidate. The votes of the traditionalist NU senior *kiai* mostly supported AMIN in the 2024 election, evidence that the PKB’s vote acquisition increased is a strong support that the increase in the PKB’s vote acquisition was due to the erosion of some of PPP’s votes among Nahdliyin citizens.

Sixth, the campaign strategy was less strategic in rallying votes from young people, especially Gen-Z. From various cases of regional head elections, PPP failed to learn from previous experiences in order to increase votes in the 2024 elections. The image of PPP as an open, honest, and clean party that is liked by young people was not built as a political branding framework to increase the party’s prestige. Instead, PPP is trapped in political pragmatism by recruiting a rich young businessperson, namely Sandiaga Uno, to become part of the party elites whose role in PPP has not been tested. The emergence of Sandiaga Uno was expected to be able to attract votes from young people, but what happened was not the case. The impression that Sandiaga Uno joined gave the impression that this party would be a temporary ride for Sandiaga Uno’s ambition to become a vice presidential candidate who would be paired with Ganjar Pranowo.

In addition, the emergence of new people in PPP who were previously cadres of the Gerindra party is proof that the party with the Kaaba symbol failed to carry out cadre formation within the party. PPP seemed to have no compatible cadres who could be offered to the Indonesian people in the 2024 election. This was exacerbated by the party’s program which was not very visible in its support for young people who were expected to increase the number of votes. On the contrary, the PPP is still trapped in

old programs that are monotonous and do not touch the grassroots, especially for young people, so that their attachment to the party has weakened.

Seventh, there was a lack of financial-logistics support for the party. Financial support is one of the important factors in the campaign of any political party, whether a religious-based party or a nationalist-secular party. In an open proportional system, financial strength is a determinant. PPP with its character as an Islamic party no longer shows itself as an ideological (Islamic) party. The most votes or the PPP proportional open list election system also supports non-ideological parties in determining the open proportional election system.

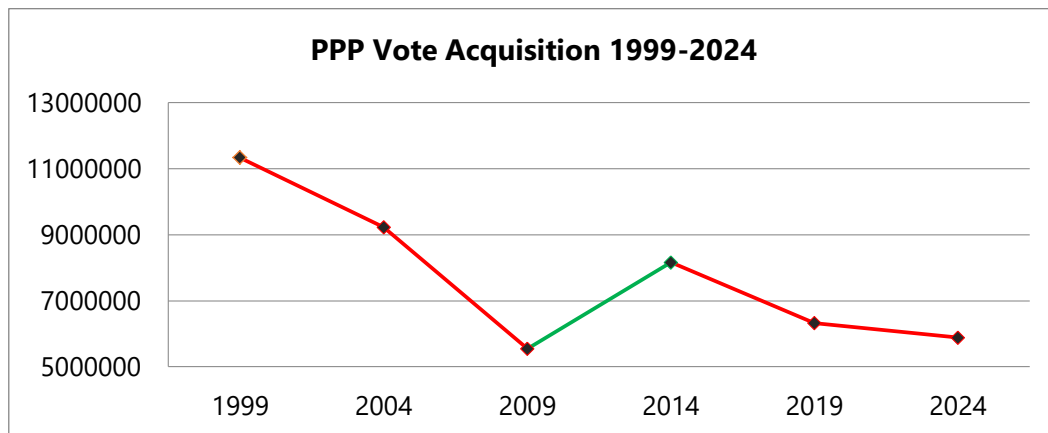


Figure 2. PPP Votes Obtained in the Reformation Era (1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2024 General Elections)

Most of the public recognizes the character and color of PPP, as seen from the party's principles and symbols, which show that this party is an ideological party, namely an Islamic party, with an open proportional election system that has revealed that the party is only an election vehicle for individuals who will compete in the election, meaning that the role and influence of the party has decreased because society no longer chooses the party, whereas society chooses the party's personnel themselves. Thus, that strength is based on how much financial strength is present, no longer how the party's program is to be disseminated. The failure of the PPP to secure parliamentary representation has had a significant impact on its electoral performance, with votes showing a consistent decline in recent years, as illustrated in Figure 2. The seven factors identified in this study as contributing to PPP's defeat in the 2024 elections also provide valuable insights for broader Islamic studies, particularly in relation to Islamic parties in Indonesia.

Conclusion

To conclude, first, an important point in the study of religious-based political parties, especially the study of Islamic parties, is there is an interesting phenomenon in the study of Islamic parties in Indonesia. Islamic parties that are spread nationwide have no correlation between their affiliation with Islamic organizations and their choice of a political party. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) members do not automatically choose the *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PKB) or the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP). The same applies to Muhammadiyah's relationship with the National Mandate Party (PAN) and the Ummat Party. For structural NU members, they are given the freedom to determine their respective political choices, either choosing an Islamic political party or a nationalist-secular political party. The same thing is also recognized by structural

Muhammadiyah members. There are no special instructions for its members to determine the choice of a particular political party.

Second, as in previous research on the study of the decline in votes for Islamic political parties in Indonesia in general elections, both since the New Order and post-reform, this study discovered different reasons from previous studies. Based on the data and analysis findings in this study, specifically regarding the failure of old Islamic parties in the 2024 general election, we found at least seven important factors that have contributed to the failure of these parties, including; internal party conflict, party leadership crisis, poor communication in collaborating between central and regional legislative candidates, a loss of charismatic figures, misdirection of support for presidential and vice presidential candidate pairs, ignoring campaign strategies for votes from young groups, and minimal financial-logistics support for the party in the campaign.

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