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Examining electoral dynamics: The strategic role of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah in the political landscape of North Sumatra

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Abstract: This research aims to analyze the strategic role of the Islamic organizations Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah in the electoral dynamics of North Sumatra. The background for this study stems from the significant influence these organizations hold in the social, educational, and political spheres of the region, leveraging their extensive membership base and organizational structure. The urgency of this research arises from the need to understand how religious organizations shape political outcomes, which is crucial for developing more inclusive governance strategies. Employing a qualitative descriptive methodology, this study explores how these organizations mobilize support during elections and influence policies through their educational and social programs. Findings reveal that Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah effectively utilize mass mobilization and social movement theories to maintain their influence in the political landscape of North Sumatra, subtly navigating and shaping local politics through strategic engagement and advocacy.

Keywords: Muhammadiyah; Al-Washliyah; politics; North Sumatra

1. Introduction

The Islamic community organizations Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah play a strategic role in social life. Muhammadiyah manages 5345 schools/madrasas, 172 colleges, and 440 religious boarding schools, in addition to operating 122 hospitals, 231 clinics, and actively engaging in global humanitarian missions. Al-Washliyah, on the other hand, oversees more than 500 schools/madrasas in North Sumatra, as well as several hospitals, orphanages, and clinics, making both pivotal in education, health, and humanitarian efforts in North Sumatra (Ardianto, 2023). In the political landscape of North Sumatra, Muhammadiyah with its 35 provincial leaders, 475 district leaders, 3947 branch leaders, 14,670 sub-branch leaders, and Al-Washliyah's target in Medan city reaching one million people through a structural census, both emerge as significant forces (Antara, 2022). A clear mass base, a solid administrative structure, and grassroots influence render these organizations crucial pillars in mass mobilization and creating electoral dynamics in North Sumatra.

Community organizations (Ormas) are manifestations of an active civil society, functioning to bridge, advocate, and defend the people's interests against the domination of capital and practical politics. With their collective strength, capability, and mass organization, Ormas monitor and engage in development policies or programs for public interest. Additionally, they maintain political and social stability by mediating various interests among community groups, thereby minimizing potential social conflicts (Arditri et al., 2022). Ormas can be formed based on various

similarities or goals, such as religion, education, and social issues. Thus, Islamic Ormas can be defined as mass-based organizations united by the aim to uphold Islam according to the Qur'an and Sunnah and to advance Muslims in various fields; including religion, education, social issues, and culture (Shomad, 2012).

The involvement of Ormas in politics is inherently linked to religious doctrines, as reflected in the divine command in the Qur'an, Surah Ar-Rum verse 41:

“Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of people have wrought, so that He may let them taste some part of what they have done, in order that they may return.”

According to Tafsir al-Muyassar (2008), this verse explains that the corruption on land and sea, such as droughts and epidemics, results from human disobedience, prompting repentance to Allah. The Ministry of Religious Affairs' interpretation emphasizes that this corruption results from idolizing desires (Kemenag, 2016). Therefore, the roles of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah in maintaining moral integrity through strengthening education, health, and humanitarian missions in North Sumatra become crucial in facing the social and political challenges triggered by moral degradation.

Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah are two Islamic Ormas with significant influence in national life, though neither directly involves in practical politics. Founded in 1912 by KH. Ahmad Dahlan, Muhammadiyah focuses on spreading Islam through education and social activities, while Al-Washliyah, established in 1930, maintains an independent stance, although its members are spread across various political parties. Both play vital roles in mass mobilization and maintaining societal moral integrity through education, health, and other social activities (Burhanuddin et al., 2022; Mursyid, 2023).

The strategic role of Islamic organizations in the political landscape in Indonesia has occurred before independence, where at that time Nahdatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah were the driving force of the Islamic movement in an effort to win independence from the colonizers. After independence and reformation, the Islamic mass organization movement has strengthened again through its strategic roles, ranging from political affiliation, work programs to the role of the ideological manifesto it carries. In the 2019 presidential and vice presidential elections in Pasuruan Regency. Although the scale of the election covers the national level, the role of local elites through Islamic mass organizations is very influential on the vote results. The results of Nida Maulida's research in 2019 show that the role of Ulama in Pasuruan Regency is very influential on the community, where the ulama or kiai have the authority to guide and direct the community to the right path, meaning that if the ulama and kiai are successfully placed in every position then the congregation will voluntarily follow their political choices (Maulida, 2019).

Furthermore, the political role of the Islamic mass organization elite in the Kediri Regency election was carried out by Cesar Demas in 2020. His research concluded that the political communication that occurs is a representation of an elite circulation process that results in an elite shift as a form of shrewdness of the replacement elite in shifting the position of the previous strong elite through a shift in values by placing influential groups in political contestation as a group capable of transferring the power of the previous group (Fauzan et al., 2023).

In the local political landscape, the role of Islamic organizations Muhammadiyah and Al Washliyah in 2018 conducted by Ikhsan Assadiki explained that the victory of Zahir-Oky Iqbal in Batu Bara Regency could not be separated from the role of the two largest mass organizations in Batu Bara Regency. This victory is because the figure of Oky Iqbal is a young Al Washliyah figure who has a mass base down to the villages. Thus, his prominence became the power of mass mobilization towards electoral competition (Ikhsan, 2018).

The urgency of this research lies in understanding how Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah shape and influence the political dynamics in North Sumatra. With a clear mass base, solid administrative structure, and far-reaching influence, their strategic role in maintaining societal morals and mobilizing electoral support warrants further investigation. This study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how these two Ormas engage in local political contests.

2. Literature review

This article examines how Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah, two influential Islamic community organizations, play a strategic role in shaping electoral politics in North Sumatra. With their large membership base and robust organizational structures, these organizations are able to mobilize support, significantly influence electoral outcomes, and maintain societal moral integrity (Rahman et al., 2023; Subando et al., 2023).

This research reveals the dynamics of the involvement of both organizations in mass mobilization and political contests in North Sumatra. Using a descriptive approach and in-depth interviews, this study seeks to understand the strategies and impacts of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah's involvement in local politics. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights into the model of engagement of Islamic community organizations in the electoral political map and its implications for the strengthening of Islamic preaching in the governmental realm.

The study employs mass mobilization theory, which explains how Islamic community organizations like Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah are able to mobilize their supporters in political contests (McAdam et al., 2001). Mobilization occurs through social networks, preaching activities, education, and other social activities. The author also uses social movement theory with Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah as social movements using their resources to influence local policies and politics. This includes organizational strategies, issue framing, and resource mobilization (Tilly, 2018). In this research, the author analyzes 1000 previous studies with keywords "Muhammadiyah," "Al-Washliyah," and "politics" as shown in **Figure 1**.

The network analysis of the research on Muhammadiyah and politics illustrates the relationships between various key concepts such as "Muhammadiyah," "effect," "strategy," "technique," "organization," and "influence." The term "Muhammadiyah" is central in the network, surrounded by related themes such as religion, education, techniques, strategies, and organization. This indicates that in the political context, Muhammadiyah plays a crucial role in influencing education, political strategies, and social influence through structured techniques and instruments as shown in **Figure 2**.

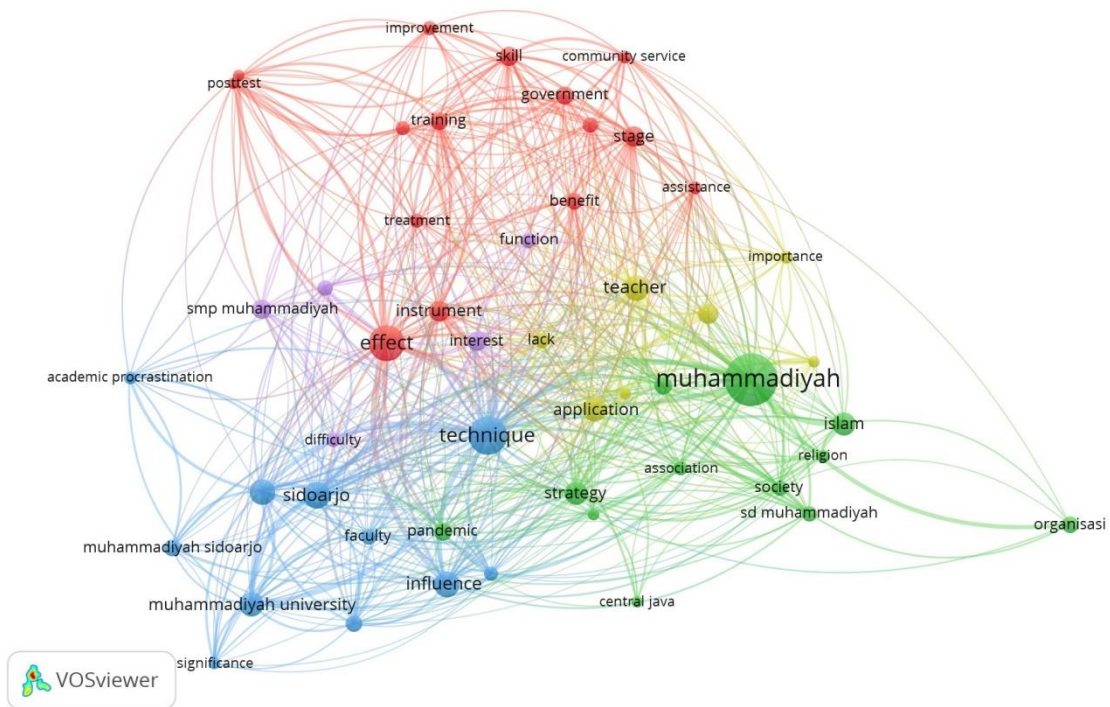


Figure 1. Network analysis between Muhammadiyah and politics.

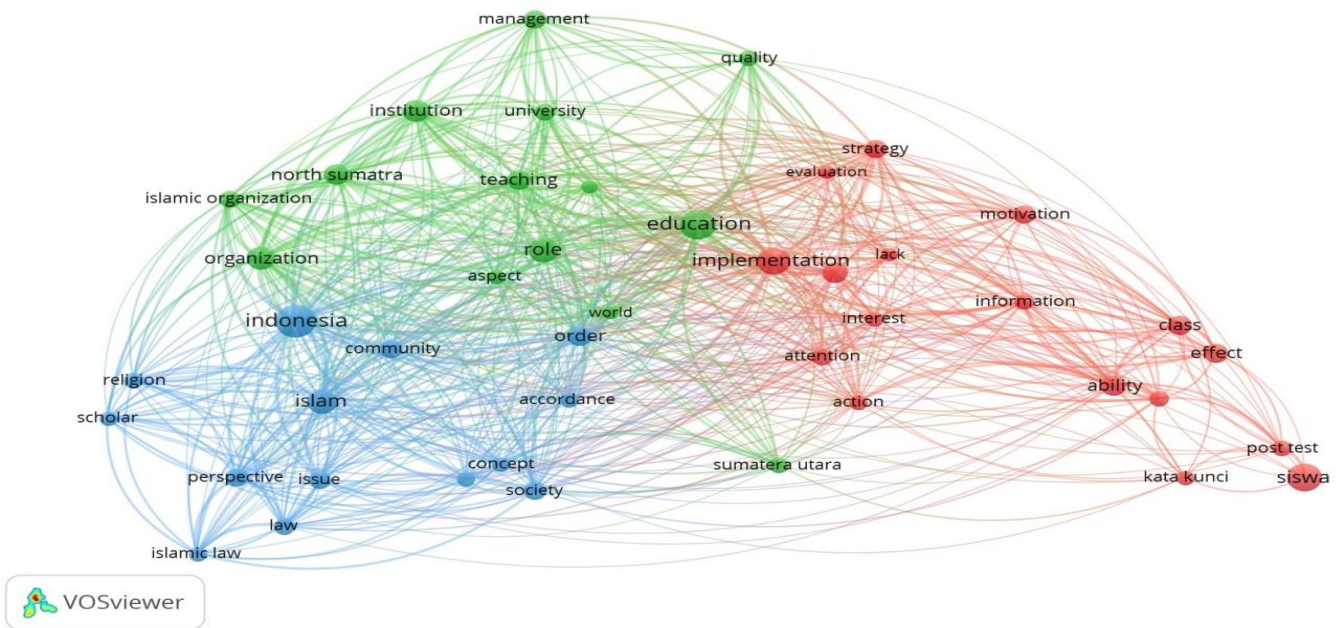


Figure 2. Network analysis between Al-Washliyah and politics.

The network analysis of the research on Al-Washliyah and politics shows strong connections between concepts such as “implementation,” “strategy,” “education,” “management,” and “role.” The terms “implementation” and “education” are central in the network, highlighting the importance of education in Al-Washliyah’s strategy. Additionally, “organization,” “institution,” and “role” also have significant connections, depicting Al-Washliyah’s role in shaping social order through educational, management, and political strategies in North Sumatra. In addition to the above analyses, the author reviews several previous studies for comparison as follows:

- 1) Al-Hamdi (2023): The study uses a historical analysis approach to trace the

political consciousness of Muhammadiyah. It assesses how Muhammadiyah's involvement in politics has evolved over time and what might lie ahead. This differs from the present research as it focuses solely on Muhammadiyah and uses a historical lens, whereas our study examines both Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah's roles in mobilizing electoral support in Sumatera Utara.

- 2) Ardritri et al. (2022): This research utilizes a qualitative analysis to investigate how Al Washliyah acts as a political actor in North Sumatra's development. The findings highlight the organization's strategic actions in regional politics. Unlike this study which focuses on electoral dynamics, Ardritri et al. focus more on developmental politics, providing a different context of political engagement.
- 3) Ja'far (2022): Ja'far explores the interplay between religion and politics within Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah using a socio-political framework. The study dives into how the organization's religious stance impacts its political behavior, which is distinct from this study's focus on electoral engagement and the mobilization aspects of both Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah.
- 4) Muallim et al. (2024): The research revisits the political practices of Muhammadiyah in South Sulawesi through a critical political theory perspective. This approach contrasts with our study's comparative analysis of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah in North Sumatra, focusing on how historical and current political involvement shapes community support in elections.

The presence of mass organizations in the electoral competition landscape explains the meaning of innovative social movement theory. The theory of the movement carried out by Islamic mass organizations is an innovative social movement as explained by Piort Sztompka, focusing on how social movements can change or create innovations in society (Sikumbang et al., 2024). This movement is often oriented towards achieving significant social change, both in cultural, political, economic and technological settings. So, in substance, if you look at the Islamic mass organization movement from the perspective of social movements, it provides an explanation that there are three elements of the progressive movement carried out by Islamic mass organizations in electoral competition, namely: First, resource mobilization theory: Emphasizes the importance of resources (financial, human, information) in supporting social movements. Second, framing theory: Emphasizes how social movements frame their issues to influence public opinion and gain support. Third, social network theory: Examines the role of social networks in spreading innovative ideas and supporting social movements. This explains that the direction political policies take in politics depends on how much influence and support the majority of voters have.

3. Materials and methods

This article is written using a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Weyant, 2022). The aim of this qualitative research is to discover and narratively describe the research activities conducted and to identify the impact of actions taken on a specific issue, problem, or event. Descriptive analysis methods are utilized to address problems related to the issue discussed based on facts and existing data. Data collection techniques employed in this article include both

primary and secondary data collection (Pope and Mays, 2019). Primary data are gathered through observation of the issues under discussion in this article. Meanwhile, secondary data are obtained through literature review techniques, which involve collecting as much information as possible from secondary sources. Data analysis is conducted using content analysis by examining several predetermined data through the coding process (Krippendorff, 2022). The collected data are analyzed for their validity using source triangulation techniques (Flick, 2020).

Muhammadiyah and Al Washliyah organizations in North Sumatra are the largest Islamic organizations that have two differences that become originality in this research compared to roles in other regions in Indonesia. First, the aspect of organizational structure. Muhammadiyah has a very organized and widespread structure. Meanwhile, Al Washliyah only has a strong organizational structure only in North Sumatra Province. Muhammadiyah is usually hidden power in practical politics, but in North Sumatra Province, Muhammadiyah Organization gives a different color and appears as part of practical politics. Second, the aspect of teaching/ideology, Muhammadiyah Reformist and modernist, prioritizing purification (purification) of Islamic teachings from practices that are considered *bid'ah* (innovation in religion). While Al Washliyah Traditionalist by maintaining the values of Islamic teachings inherited by previous scholars.

This research was conducted from July to December 2023 using qualitative methods. This research collected data by interviewing 8 informants who were purposively selected. The data was matched with observation and document data followed by qualitative analysis. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method. Data collection is in the form of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained by observation on the issue under study. While secondary data is obtained through literature study techniques in the form of literature review from existing sources. The data analysis used is descriptive qualitative. Primary data based on Muhammadiyah and Al Washliyah program data translated into political support, namely: Education, health, social, *siyasah* and environmental programs. With these various programs, Muhammadiyah and Al Washliyah strive to make a real and sustainable contribution in improving the quality of life of the people and the wider community.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Role of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah in North Sumatera politics

Muhammadiyah, established in 1912 by K. H. Ahmad Dahlan, serves as a socio-religious organization focused on community development through various educational and health initiatives. Although not a political organization, Muhammadiyah exerts a strong influence in shaping political narratives through its activities and programs. The organization manages political issues through two lenses: state politics, which relates to national issues, and power politics, which more directly involves competition for governmental positions.

In North Sumatra, Muhammadiyah allows its cadres the freedom to explore and

express their political views independently, avoiding direct mobilization for political support for specific candidates or parties. The organization emphasizes the importance of advancing Islamic values in every political decision made by its members, ensuring that these values are reflected in political actions without being exclusively tied to any particular political entity.

Table 1. The role of Muhammadiyah in North Sumatra politics.

Role	Description
Education and preaching	Utilizing educational institutions and preaching programs to disseminate Islamic values.
Mobilization and social advocacy	Actively involved in mobilizing members and the community to advocate for social justice issues.
Influence on public policy	Influencing policy through collaboration with the government and political parties.
Community empowerment	Enhancing the capacity of local communities, influencing local politics through active participation.

From the **Table 1** discussion, it can be inferred that Muhammadiyah leverages its extensive educational institutions and preaching programs to spread Islamic values in North Sumatra. Through formal and non-formal education, the organization not only delivers religious education but also promotes understanding of how Islamic values can be applied in social and political life (Hamami and Nuryana, 2022; Muryadi et al., 2023).

Actively, Muhammadiyah is also involved in mobilizing members and the community to advocate for social justice issues. This initiative involves organizing public discussions, seminars, and campaigns targeting social policy improvements and the development of a fairer and more inclusive community (Efendi et al., 2021; Prakasa et al., 2021).

In terms of influencing public policy, Muhammadiyah collaborates with the government and various political parties to impact policies that support the values of justice and equitable prosperity (Rahmi et al., 2023). Through dialogue and advocacy, Muhammadiyah strives to ensure that public policies reflect principles of social justice consistent with Islamic teachings.

Muhammadiyah is also committed to empowering local communities (Alifuddin et al., 2021). By enhancing community capacities through various educational and economic programs, the organization ensures that communities have an active role in determining the direction and outcomes of local politics. Through these activities, Muhammadiyah helps build a strong foundation for responsible and informed political participation.

Meanwhile, Al-Washliyah, established in 1930, plays a strategic role in strengthening civil society in North Sumatra (Sumantri et al., 2021), despite facing various internal challenges such as management and financial issues. The organization has an extensive structure that allows its members to engage in various political parties, creating diversity in political support and strengthening its position as a key player in local politics.

Al-Washliyah also faces challenges in self-financing and maintaining independence, with many of its assets controlled by others, which complicates the execution of its programs and initiatives. This affects member recruitment and program implementation, indicating weaknesses in organizational structure and

financial accountability.

Table 2 shows that Al-Washliyah in North Sumatra plays a dynamic political role through the active involvement of its members across various political parties. This diversification expands their influence and demonstrates a variety of approaches in local politics. The organization also strongly promotes political advocacy and education, particularly regarding the principle of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, which guides its members to engage in politics in accordance with Islamic values.

Table 2. Political roles of Al-Washliyah in North Sumatra.

Political role	Description
Involvement in political parties	Members of Al-Washliyah are active across various political parties, enhancing the diversity of their political support.
Advocacy and political education	Advocating the principle of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar and educating members about political involvement based on Islam.
Community empowerment	Strengthening civil society with programs that enhance political and social participation.
Support in local elections	Actively involved in supporting candidates in local executive elections, influencing local politics.

Additionally, Al-Washliyah strengthens civil society through programs that enhance social and political participation (Siddik and Rosnita, 2017). These initiatives not only raise political awareness but also mobilize support for candidates in local elections, giving Al-Washliyah a strategic role in shaping election outcomes. Their activity in local executive elections, in particular, reflects their commitment to advocating community interests and addressing issues relevant to communal values.

Interestingly, Al-Washliyah's position in politics differs from Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, which have more formal political affiliations through parties such as PKB and PAN. Al-Washliyah is not tied to any specific political party, allowing its members to engage broadly across the existing political spectrum.

Al-Washliyah's involvement in electoral politics, especially in North Sumatra, is highly dynamic. The organization actively participates in supporting various candidates in local executive elections, demonstrating their commitment to influencing local politics through strategic and principled support. The fundamental principle of Al-Washliyah in politics is amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, emphasizing the importance of promoting good and preventing wrongdoing. This makes Al-Washliyah a moral voice in North Sumatran politics, striving to elevate issues relevant to the interests of the Muslim community and society at large.

Al-Washliyah continues to participate in the development of a democratic society through the involvement of its cadres in various political parties and local executive elections. Candidates often seek the organization's support during elections, and in each local executive election, candidates come to seek the sympathy of Al-Washliyah members (Aziz et al., 2019; Yazid, 2023). However, the organization still provides freedom for its cadres to make their own political choices. From the author's interviews with senior officials from the Muhammadiyah organization in Mandailing Natal (Madina) and Labuhanbatu, as well as senior officials from Al-Washliyah in Madina and Labuhanbatu, it is understood that their mobilization in the political context is highly complex. The author's interview findings are coded in the following tabulation.

From the interview results (**Table 3**), Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah in North Sumatra play significant yet distinctly different roles in the political landscape. Muhammadiyah, known for its indirect political involvement, strategically promotes its members for governmental roles, fostering a culture where political engagement is informed by Islamic values. This approach helps to maintain the organization’s religious integrity while encouraging responsible political presence among its members.

Table 3. Interview’s coding.

Organization	Role in politics	Support strategy	Mobilization and member freedom	Election participation
Muhammadiyah	Promotes members for governmental roles, indirect involvement	Support through individual backing, emphasizes Islamic values	Allows members to freely choose their political path	Modest support for candidates, based on personal relationships
Al-Washliyah	Provides political education, maintains a non-partisan stance	Educates on political prudence, emphasizes amar ma’ruf nahi munkar	Promotes independence in political engagement	Similar modest support, focused on individual initiatives

Al-Washliyah, on the other hand, emphasizes political education and maintains a steadfast non-partisan stance. The organization focuses on educating its members about the principles of amar ma’ruf nahi munkar, guiding them in making wise political choices. This educational approach not only informs members’ political decisions but also ensures that their actions align with Islamic teachings, regardless of their party affiliations. Both organizations advocate for member independence in political activities, allowing individuals to choose their paths without overt organizational interference. This freedom ensures that members’ political engagement is a personal decision, reflecting individual beliefs rather than organizational mandates.

In electoral participation, both Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah adopt a low-profile strategy, preferring to subtly influence elections through personal relationships and community influence rather than through overt political campaigns. This method highlights a strategic choice to influence political outcomes while maintaining a distance from direct electoral politics, keeping the organizations focused on broader social and religious goals.

Both entities, despite their different approaches, have become key actors in North Sumatran politics, demonstrating how religiously-based entities can influence and shape the regional political landscape through education, advocacy, and electoral participation. Both Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah, through their activities, not only contribute to social and educational development but also actively shape the political views and choices of the community in North Sumatra.

“We at Al Washliyah cannot move alone, we must work together. In order for these programs to work, we must certainly enter the political joints both at the village and regional levels. That is why many villages heads, heads of departments and regional heads are Al Washliyah cadres. As in North Labuhanbatu Regency, Labuhanbatu, Mandailing and other areas. We do not want to be trapped and anti-practical politics, instead we must enter into it to succeed the work program and provide benefits” (Jufri Nasution Chairman of PD

Al Washliyah Mandailing Natal Regency, Thursday, 7 September 2023).

“In the Muhammadiyah organizational movement, we have never been prohibited from practical politics, all must move to provide benefits and smooth the Muhammadiyah program, that is the key” (Husein Lubis, Chairman of PDM Labuhanbatu Regency, Wednesday, 1 November 2023).

Based on data collected with a qualitative approach, a combination of document data with the results of interviews that the author found from various sources that Al Washliyah North Sumatra has 25 regional leaders, 1 regional leader, and 10 assemblies which are the manifesto of the Al Washliyah struggle movement, namely; education assembly, da'wah, social security, legal aid and human rights, economy, cadre, information communication, siyasah, cultural arts and assets. The Al Washliyah organization also has seven organizational wings that function as the foundation of the movement, namely: Muslimat Al Washliyah, Al Washliyah Teachers and Lecturers Association (IGDA), Al Washliyah Youth Movement (GPA), Al Washliyah Bachelor Association (ISARAH), Al Washliyah Student Association (HIMMAH), Al Washliyah Students Association (IPA) and Al Washliyah Women's Force (APA).

Thus, this becomes the formal structure of this organization which must also be established in the regions, this condition becomes a force that has a clear and directed political mix in electoral political battles. When referring to partisan numbers, the number of Al Washliyah cadres in North Sumatra Province is 3,121,087 people, this is what makes the Chairman of Al Washliyah North Sumatra Dedi Iskandar Batubara successfully elected as a member of DPD RI (Regional Representative Council) and has the highest vote in North Sumatra of 1,081,487 votes, while in the North Sumatra DPRD seats, out of a total of 100 seats, Al Washliyah cadres won 53 seats across political parties. Whereas in Medan city, Al Washliyah worshipers are 651,000 people from the total DPT of Medan city of 1,853,485 people. While in Siantar city as many as 51,054 people from the total DPT of 202,206 people. Labuhanbatu Regency has 191,456 votes from a total DPT of 357,455. Finally, Mandailing Natal Regency has 104,531 people with a DPT of 334,883 votes.

On the other hand, the Muhammadiyah Organization in Medan city has 91,561 people from the total DPT of Medan city of 1,853,485 people. While in Siantar city there are 45,714 people from the total DPT of 202,206 people. Labuhanbatu Regency has 83,071 votes from a total DPT of 357,455. Finally, Mandailing Natal Regency has 65,510 people with a DPT of 334,883 votes (results of interviews and document analysis). The congregation base owned by these two organizations is the political power of Muhammadiyah and Al Washliyah in the role of electoral battles as well as a strong bargaining position. As explained by the Chairman of the Secretary of Al Washliyah Labuhanbatu Regency Rahmat Hidayat.

“Yes, we are very solid in the Al Washliyah congregation so that this is our bargaining position against each candidate for regional head. With so many cadres, our solidity makes us always have a meaning and role in elections. In Labuhanbatu Regency, we proved it even though there were two rounds” (Interview with the Secretary General of Al Washliyah Labuhanbatu Regency, 17 November 2023).

4.2. Political engagement model of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah in North Sumatra

Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah in North Sumatra play a significant role in local politics through their involvement in local executive elections. Although operating as non-political entities, both organizations are crucial in shaping political choices in the region by supporting specific candidates, reflecting their significant influence in local politics. By basing their support on values and interests they deem important, these organizations ensure that the policies they advocate are aligned with their principles.

Each employs a different strategy in directing their support. Muhammadiyah, with its broad base in education and religion, leverages its influence to mobilize support for candidates who uphold Islamic educational and moral principles (Jung, 2014; Prakoso et al., 2022). On the other hand, Al-Washliyah tends to use a more direct approach in politics with its members' active involvement in a diverse array of political parties, from Golkar to Democrat, reflecting a diversity in broader politics.

Furthermore, both organizations advocate for the general public's interests, particularly the Muslim community, by influencing policies that promote social justice and community development. These activities not only strengthen their position as community leaders but also as key players in local politics who can negotiate and shape political outcomes for the benefit of their community, as we can see in **Figure 3**.

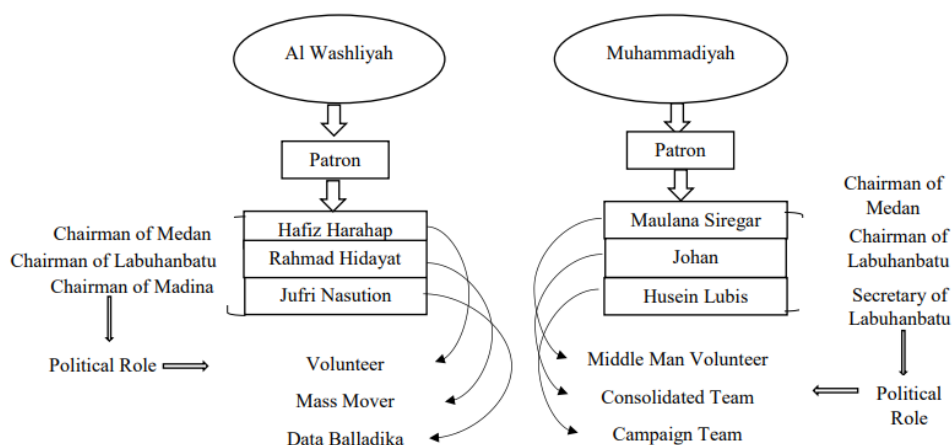


Figure 3. Model of mass organization politics involvement in North Sumatra.

Involvement in local elections, such as in Medan, Labuhanbatu, and Mandailing Natal, demonstrates the importance of these organizations in supporting candidates who align with their values. Personal closeness between organizational leaders and candidates enables them to more effectively influence local politics, ensuring that the policies and programs they advocate meet the needs and aspirations of their community.

Fundamentally, Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah implement a model of political engagement that helps shape the structure and dynamics of local power in North Sumatra. Through political education for members and strong advocacy, they strengthen local democracy by ensuring that local executive elections reflect the

desires and needs of the people. Both organizations, with their strong mass bases and organized structural frameworks, exemplify how non-political entities can have a significant impact on local politics.

5. Discussion

Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah, as influential Islamic mass organizations in North Sumatra, play a pivotal role in shaping regional politics, illustrating key aspects of mass mobilization theory and social movement theory. These organizations utilize their extensive networks to mobilize support during elections, subtly directing political outcomes through grassroots activism and educational campaigns. Their approach exemplifies the principles of mass mobilization theory, where the organization of large groups is orchestrated to achieve political goals without direct involvement in electoral competition.

In the context of social movement theory, both Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah engage in ongoing campaigns to promote social change aligned with Islamic values. This is evident in their strategic positions in politics, where they advocate for policies and candidates that reflect their ideological viewpoints. Thus, they contribute to a broader social movement aimed at political and social empowerment (Brissette and King, 2023; Engels and Müller, 2019).

Muhammadiyah's strategy often involves promoting capable leaders from within its ranks to take roles in public administration, ensuring that governance aligns with its educational and moral objectives. This method of influencing politics from within by placing members in key positions can be seen as a practical application of social movement theory, where the aim is to enact change through systemic integration rather than open political confrontation (Dillette and Benjamin, 2022; Sternisko et al., 2020).

Al-Washliyah's approach, although similar in its ultimate aims, often focuses more on equipping its members with the political acumen needed to navigate the complexities of the political landscape. This preparation ensures that members can make informed decisions aligned with the organizational principles of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining right and forbidding wrong), which is at the core of its political engagement strategy.

Both organizations also demonstrate a keen understanding of the local political climate, enabling them to act as brokers of political capital. These strategic brokers allow them to reinforce their influence, particularly in areas where political loyalties are volatile, and support from a well-organized group can tip the scales in election contests (Harsono and Nasution, 2020; Kim, 2023).

The impact of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah on the political landscape of North Sumatra is evidence of their ability to adapt traditional religious networks into powerful political tools. This adaptability highlights a sophisticated understanding of mass mobilization and social movement theory, as they apply these concepts to enhance it.

The novelty of this research lies in its exploration of the nuanced ways in which Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah in North Sumatra operationalize their religious doctrines to exert significant influence on regional politics. Unlike previous research that broadly discussed the political roles of religious organizations in Indonesia, this

study delves into the specific political engagement strategies employed by these organizations, revealing their unique capabilities in leveraging mass mobilization and social movement theory to navigate and shape the North Sumatran political landscape effectively. This detailed examination adds a new dimension to our understanding of the interactions between religion and politics in regions where such dynamics are highly influential.

6. Conclusion

This research concludes that Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah significantly shape the political dynamics of North Sumatra through strategic religious-based political mobilization and social advocacy. By embedding their religious values into the regional political structure, they influence not only election outcomes but also advocate for governance aligned with Islamic principles. It is recommended that future research explore the impact of such political involvement on policy-making and social change in North Sumatra, potentially offering insights into the broader implications of religious organization participation in politics across Indonesia. This could aid policymakers in better understanding the intersection of religion and politics, leading to more inclusive and representative decision-making processes.

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