

NON-RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC ORIENTATIONS IN THE VOTING PROCESS: A RECENT STUDY OF JAVANESE VOTERS

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Published online: 31 July 2023

To cite this article: Sobari, W. 2023. Non-religious and ethnic orientations in the voting process: A recent study of Javanese voters. *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies* 19 (2): 131–161. <https://doi.org/10.21315/ijaps2023.19.2.6>

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.21315/ijaps2023.19.2.6>

ABSTRACT

Previous studies on Javanese voters in Indonesia emphasised sociological factors, mainly religious and ethnic, in the shaping of voting decisions. Religious positions and socio-religious orientation encourage partisan politics of the voters in elections. In the democratic era, the behaviour of Javanese voters outside the area of the Javanese ethnic bases in Central Java, Yogyakarta, and East Java resulted in the same explanation. This article however argues that Javanese ethnic identity is not the foundation for decisions when selecting candidates for regional heads; instead, this foundation is based on religious similarity. This qualitative observational study examines the logic of vote shifting from the incumbent candidate to the challenger in the 2020 pilkada (elections for regional leader) of Blitar Regency, Indonesia. It reveals that emotional closeness between voters and the challenger encourages electoral shift. The closeness is built upon two aspects: voters' involvement in tarekat (Sufi order) activities and networks that attach to both the regent and vice vice-regent candidates as well as the murid (pupil) relationship with the vice-regent candidate. Another aspect is the similarities between voters and Muslim mass-based organisations (MBOs) that support the challenger. Moreover, the emotional closeness between the incumbent and their constituents explains voters' decision to keep voting for him. Based on the fieldwork findings, emotional closeness can be interpreted as a form of attachment or loyalty that affects voters' perceptions of candidates. Therefore, consideration of the emotional bond between voters and

candidate extends the logic of Javanese voting behaviour, as previously highlighted in the explanation of religious and cultural factors.

Keywords: Javanese voters, vote shifting, local election, emotional closeness, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Amongst the 1,340 ethnic groups in Indonesia, Javanese is the largest. The census of the Central Statistics Agency in 2010 discovered that the Javanese population accounted for 40.22% of the total. If the portion is fixed, the Javanese account for 114,024,400 out of 270,200,000 inhabitants (the 2020 census).¹

In the electoral contest, this number represents a considerable ballot potential. Therefore, the candidates in elections, both regional and national, try to attract Javanese ballots. According to the results of the national exit poll during the 2019 presidential election by Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC 2019), the Javanese ethnicity factor plays a vital role in shaping vote choice.

However, in explaining voting behaviour in Indonesia, ethnic factors do not stand alone. Explanations of ethnicity are usually combined with religious factors which are known as social cleavage. The explanation of the cleavage, especially religion, has coloured academic debates about voting behaviour in Indonesia and has become one of the essential academic camps commonly known as *politik aliran* (stream politics).

The first election in Indonesia was held democratically in 1955 under the leadership of President Soekarno. The study of voting behaviour at the first election sparked a theory of stream politics or social cleavage. Feith (1957 as cited in Ufen 2010) divides four streams of voting behaviour based on their socio-religious identity, namely followers of the “traditionalist” Muslim Party, the “modernist” Muslim Party, the Nationalist Party, and the Communist Party.

A national study by Higashikata and Kawamura (2015) strengthens this explanation. It utilises the stream politics factor as a religious cleavage to explain the religious factor in shaping vote choice at the regional level in the 1999–2014 legislative elections. The two researchers mention one of the conclusions; religious differences still influence voter behaviour in Indonesia. There is a statistically significant correlation between the religious character of the region and the difference in the votes gained by Islamic parties versus secular parties.

After President Soekarno's leadership, Indonesian elections did not run democratically under President Soeharto's leadership. Therefore, scholars considered voting behaviour in the six elections (1971–1997) at that time (New Order) to be inadequate for analysis because the elections were held under a hegemonic party situation of the ruling party. Nonetheless, Gaffar (1992), by referring to Geertz's (1960) well-known trichotomic Javanese society, reveals an explanation that has roots in socio-religious norms that shape voting behaviour, especially Javanese.

Furthermore, the resignation of President Soeharto in 1998 was followed by the holding of democratic elections in 1999. Democratic elections (1999–2019) gave rise to a second academic camp explaining voting behaviour based on a rational approach. Liddle and Mujani (2007) who conducted electoral surveys in 1999 and 2004, revealed that poll data in Indonesia does not support the proposition that religion is an important influence on voting behaviour. Instead, voters consider leadership and party identification (party ID) in legislative and presidential elections. Sociological explanations (ethnicity and religion) are less valuable than leadership and party ID.

Other than that, Mujani et al. (2018) explain the emergence of critical democrats since the era of democratisation (1999). Analysis of the legislative and presidential elections (1999–2014) presents the emergence of citizens, predominantly urban and highly educated Muslim youths, who took a critical position on participation in elections (non-voting). When deciding to participate, they evaluate institutions, leaders, and policy supplies. They are critical of the incumbent and will vote for a challenger when it is perceived more favourably. The failure of the three incumbent parties to maintain their victory in the 2004 election [the *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* or Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP)], the 2009 election (*Partai Golongan Karya* or Functional Groups Party (Golkar)], and the 2014 election (Democratic Party or *Demokrat*) indicate their presence.

Nevertheless, the emergence of critical democrats cannot be separated from the context of political competition. When incumbents do not participate in elections, political options become limited. Hence, their critical attitude is not accommodated. This situation encourages them to consider sociological factors such as religion and regionalism in vote choice (Mujani et al. 2018). Thus, political competition's context factor can be considered a third academic camp.

The voting behaviour in the last election (2019) was recorded in a national exit poll by SMRC. One poll result corroborates the partisan political analysis of voters due to socio-religious factors. SMRC revealed that

party choice varied according to demographics, mainly based on religious differences. For example, support for the party with the most votes in the 2019 election with a nationalist character, PDIP, from non-Muslim voters (48.4%) is stronger than from Muslim voters (15.9%). In contrast, vote choices for mass-based Islamic parties, the Prosperous Justice Party [*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS)], the National Mandate Party [*Partai Amanat Nasional* (PAN)], the National Awakening Party [*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PKB)], the United Development Party [*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP)], and the Crescent Moon Star Party [*Partai Bulan Bintang* (PBB)], came mainly from Muslim voters and almost did not get ballots from non-Muslim voters.

Studies of voting behaviour in three election periods (1955, 1971–1997, 1999–2019) indicate change and continuity. Based on the academic camps, voting behaviour has changed from explaining social cleavage to rational voting behaviour. Nonetheless, explanations based on social cleavage (religion and ethnicity) are still relevant in explaining voting behaviour to vote for parties and presidential candidates until the last election in 2019.

Specific Javanese voting behaviour has been explained in previous studies. Nevertheless, there is little variation in the explanation of Javanese voters in the pre-democratic and post-democratic eras. Two major studies before the democratic era emphasised the explanation of sociological factors, especially religion, which shape voting decisions. Therefore, studying Javanese voters is an important academic challenge. Studies on Javanese voting behaviour still provide ample opportunity for academic discussion.

The importance of religion amongst the Javanese has become a political issue in political competition (Geertz 1960), in which religion directs Javanese voting behaviour during the post-independence Old Order government. Gaffar (1992) echoed Geertz's theory that socio-religious orientation encouraged partisan politics of Javanese voters during the hegemonic party system and authoritarian New Order governments.

In the democratic era, the behaviour of Javanese voters outside the area of the Javanese ethnic base (Central Java, Yogyakarta, and East Java) resulted in the same explanation. Javanese ethnic identity is not the basis for decisions when selecting candidates for regional heads from the same ethnicity in the *pilkada* (elections for regional leader) in North Sumatra. Instead, these decisions are based on religious similarities (Aspinall et al. 2011).

Nonetheless, Javanese identity politics encouraged ethnic-based choices to strengthen the bargaining power of Javanese voters in the 2012 Jakarta *pilkada*. Most Javanese migrated to Jakarta to improve their quality

of life. They voted for a candidate for governor who had better policies and could manage Jakarta in a manner that resulted in the Javanese benefiting equally from any development, on par with other ethnic groups (Prasetyawan 2014).

Another study reveals the identity politics of Javanese voters in the 2014 presidential election. Aji and Dartarto's (2018) study established that villages with a majority Javanese population tended to vote for Jokowi, a Javanese. As a result, the probability of Jokowi's electoral victory in those villages has increased by 35.5%. This is because Jokowi symbolises the grassroots of Java to the Javanese voters.

Hanan (2020) also contributed to the analysis of ethnic identity politics in the 2019 presidential election. The correlation between ethnicity and presidential choice is clear. Most Javanese (67%) voted for Jokowi; the rest voted for Prabowo. In addition to ethnic reasons, Hanan (2020) argues that religious positions play a role in voting behaviour. Voters with an Islamic and non-Javanese political orientation tended to vote for Prabowo. Conversely, voters less politically oriented to Islam and Java voted for Jokowi.

Pepinsky (2019) examines the results of the 2019 presidential election and uncovers important trends in the position of religion in electoral politics in Indonesia. Religious identity drives electoral cleavage more strongly than ideology. However, religious identity still interacts with other types of political cleavage in the context of Indonesia's multi-ethnic democracy.

Meanwhile, research by Mietzner and Muhtadi (2020) expands on the explanation of Javanese voters, as observed by Pepinsky (2019) and Hanan (2020). Affiliation with the Muslim mass-based organisation (MBO) *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) strengthens ethnic-based identity politics amongst Javanese voters who live in the centre of Javanese culture (Central Java and East Java). Thus, Javanese NU supporters tended to vote for candidates of the same ethnicity during the 2019 presidential election (Mietzner and Muhtadi 2020).

Other studies that explore voting behaviour in-depth in the Javanese culture bases include Sobari (2016), which reveals the behaviour of *anut grubyuk* (fitting in) as group-oriented voting in two districts in East Java. The explanation of *anut grubyuk* amongst Javanese voters cannot be separated from the role of Javanese communal norms in explaining the voting orientation. Furthermore, the adoption of *anut grubyuk* results from the practice of electoral manipulation by local and neighbourhood elites to mobilise voters for certain candidates in the *pilkada*.

Javanese voters also vote for candidates who are *blater* (friendly, easy to socialise with). Hence, popular leaders close to the people are the most desired by Javanese voters (Sobari 2017). The *blater* character represents the Javanese leadership philosophy of *prasaja* and *manjing ajur-ajer* (wanting to live modestly and get along with ordinary people). It is also compatible with Javanese leadership wisdom not to show *adigang* (pride of power), *adigung* (pride of greatness), and *adiguna* (pride of skill and expertise). In the case of the 2015 Blitar Regency *pilkada*, *blater* had given rise to a sole candidacy.

Javanese voters are moreover easily persuaded by the image of potential leaders (Sevtyan et al. 2018). For instance, *gumunan* (easily amazed) behaviour is relevant to explaining Javanese feudalistic socio-culture. The Javanese tend to appreciate someone based on their social status, education, and wealth because they are valued more in society (Hardjowirogo 1989).

This study seeks to enrich knowledge surrounding the analysis of Javanese voters. In addition to explaining social factors, especially religion and ethnicity as noted in previous studies, this study reveals the importance of the relationship between the leader (candidate) and voters in explaining voting orientation. This relationship is a topic that is relatively less discussed in academic research on Javanese voters.

Primarily, this research encourages the explanation of emotional closeness between candidates and voters that drives the shift of votes (vote shifting) from the incumbent candidate to the challenger, revealed in the 2020 *pilkada* in three villages in Blitar Regency, East Java. This analysis also highlights the logical relationship between closeness to the leader in voting situations and the Javanese philosophy of life. Nevertheless, the arguments in this text do not interpret the closeness of candidates and voters as an exclusively Javanese cultural reality. Instead, this study deepens the reality of this relationship in the Islamic tradition context, especially in explaining the relationship between the challenger candidate and their constituents. It is done by discussing the involvement of *tarekat* (Sufi order) and MBO networks that construct the closeness of that relationship.

Political scientists have developed sociological and socio-psychological models for analysing voting decisions. Meanwhile, recent explanations focus more on a psychological approach. This approach seeks to respond to changes in society that impact the party ID in terms of issue orientations and candidate orientations on electoral choices (Gabriel 2020).

Oscar Gabriel (2020) explains a new scholarly perspective of voting behaviour to understand the determinants of voting. It is a cognitive approach and motivated reasoning based on processing political information before

voting choices. Here, information about parties or candidates is crucial in influencing voting decisions.

Citing the theory of Lodge and Taber (2000), Gabriel presents the theory of motivated reasoning, which is relatively close to the findings of this study: “voters often do not conform to the ideal model of a rational decider but rather follow their predispositions, select information, simplify the decisional situation and seek justification of decisions they have already made before evaluating the available alternatives” (2020: 594).

This study contends that the experience of emotional closeness and the similarities in religious and social activities between candidates and voters might explain the logic of Javanese voters when voting for candidates. In addition, Javanese wisdom as a local cultural entity can explain the importance of context in casting a vote.

The section below briefly describes the research design to show the logic of vote shifting from the incumbent to the challenger amongst rural Javanese voters. This is followed by the section that examines the closeness between candidates and voters, and develops the argument from the Javanese cultural point of view. The last section discusses Javanese voters by using the theoretical framework of voting behaviour.

RESEARCH METHODS AND SETTINGS

By examining the effect of leaders on electoral choices, this research includes the theme of political leadership. Gains (2014) states that among the various analytical perspectives and methodologies in the study of political leadership, the observational analysis is the most appropriate method for this study. This method allows researchers to provide an adequate description of political leaders and the effect of leadership on vote switching in the 2020 Blitar Regency *pilkada*.

Moreover, Gains (2014) cites the explanation of Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), that observational analysis is part of an interpretive paradigm with inductive reasoning. Operationally, this study collects data through interviews and observations and from digital archives. The interviews were conducted with voters in two villages, the local election commissioners and election supervisory board commissioner (*Bawaslu*) of Blitar Regency, local journalists, local academicians, the candidate victory team, and village officials.

The selection of villages was based on the level of electoral competition; Tentrem Village (pseudonym) of Bakung Sub-district (the biggest landslide victory for the incumbent) and Makmur Village (pseudonym) of Udanawu Sub-district (the biggest landslide victory for the challenger). This study applied inductive data analysis and a comparative method called the grounded theory method (Strauss and Corbin 1998) to analyse information collected from fieldwork. Correspondingly, the researcher read all the transcribed data and practiced three coding processes: open, axial, and selective. The analysis focused on 10 out of 20 voter informants in Makmur Village and Tentrem Village, who discussed the possibility of emotional closeness to candidates playing a role in voting.

Although the data/information collected is limited to a few informants, they are sufficient for a qualitative study that relies on human perception and understanding. Furthermore, the study explores in-depth information about voters' decisions in regional head elections, both for voting for the incumbent and challenger. Note that this study is not intended to generalise the findings (voting orientations) but to present the findings representing a group of informants.

The socio-cultural explanation of Blitar Regency begins with a demographic profile. Blitar is one of the most densely populated districts in East Java. According to the 2020 census, the population of Blitar is 1,223,745 people. The population density is 770 people/km².²

Based on the Javanese cultural division in East Java, Blitar is categorised as an area with Javanese Mataraman characteristics (Rozuli 2011). Other than that, Gauthama (2003) concludes that Mataraman is a cultural ID of Javanese society under the influence of the Mataram Kingdom, which was centred in Yogyakarta and Surakarta. One of the elements of the Javanese Mataram cultural system, which is maintained and taught from generation to generation, is the Javanese philosophy of life.

Tracing the history of Blitar Regency (established on 5 August 1324) shares the history of the Javanese Kingdoms that governed the old city of Blitar, namely Balitung Raya, Singasari Raya, and the Majapahit. Ismawati's (2002) tracing study revealed that Blitar was strongly influenced by Javanese, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions.

The syncretism of Javanese traditions (*kejawen*), based on Hinduism and Islam has influenced society and the government in Blitar. Cultural festivals conducted by the community and government indicate a blend of Islam, Hinduism, and Javanese traditions, such as *ruwatan* and *bersih desa* (cleansing rituals), *suroan* rituals, and purification of *Gong Mbah Pradah*

in Lodoyo (Rozuli 2011). Therefore, although Islam is the majority religion amongst the Blitar people, Javanese and Hindu traditions are still practised in their daily lives.

This specific local context in the form of Javanese culture's social, cultural, and political backgrounds in Blitar is relevant in explaining the 2020 Blitar *pilkada*. Moreover, it can shed additional light on the electoral preferences of Javanese voters in the regency.

The latest situation in Blitar, based on macro indicators, shows the level of welfare of its citizens. In 2015, the district's Human Development Index (HDI) (68.13) was better than that of other districts in East Java (66.99 average). However, this figure is lower than the East Java average (68.95). In 2018, the HDI of Blitar Regency reached 69.93, lower than the average HDI of East Java (70.77).

The general election commission (KPU) of Blitar Regency set a final voter list of 961,971 voters for the 2020 *pilkada* (16 October 2020). The number of eligible voters increased from the 2015 *pilkada* (917,263). On Election Day, 9 December 2020, valid votes totalled 620,969, and invalid votes totalled 24,173. Voter turnout was 645,142 (67.06%). The turnout was better than that for the 2015 *pilkada* (56%).

The political dynamics of Blitar Regency ahead of the 2020 *pilkada* were not very lively. The strong image of the incumbent discouraged local leaders and political parties from countering. Up to 18 August 2020, local media reported that few serious leaders received recommendations from political parties, except for the incumbent pair, Rijanto and Marhaenis Urip Widodo.

Until the end of the candidate registration period, the Blitar Regency Election Commission accepted the registration of only two pairs of candidates. The first was incumbent candidate pair Rijanto–Marhaenis Urip Widodo. The pair was supported by *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (PDIP), *Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya* or *Gerindra* (the Greater Indonesia Movement Party), *Partai Nasional Demokrat* (the National Democratic Party), *Partai Golongan Karya* or *Golkar*, *Partai Demokrat* (the Democratic Party), and *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (the PPP). The second was the challenger pair, Rini Syarifah–Rahmad Santoso, supported by *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* or PKB, *Partai Amanat Nasional* or PAN, and *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* or PKS.³

On 15 December 2020, the Blitar Regency KPU declared the challenger pair Rini Syarifah–Rachmad Santoso (Mak Rini–Makde Rachmad) the winner of the 2020 *pilkada*. The results of the vote recapitulation plenary meeting at

the Blitar Regency KPU revealed that the challenger received 365,365 votes (58.84%), while the incumbent won 255,604 votes (41.16%).

Based on the results of interviews during field research, several issues (negative campaigns or black campaigns) circulated in the community regarding the incumbent candidate pair, especially the incumbent deputy regent candidate. These issues led to ethical resistance in society and a shift of votes to the challenger candidates. First was the issue of the deputy regent (Marhaenis) candidate, who has two wives. There was concern in the community that if Mr Marhaenis won, he would add another wife.

Second was the issue of disharmony in the relationship between the incumbent candidate for regent and the deputy regent. The public received news that if the incumbent pair won, the incumbent regent candidate (Riyanto) would not be in office for long because he was old and sick. Subsequently, the regional leadership would be replaced by a candidate for deputy regent (Marhaenis). Marhaenis as a candidate to replace Riyanto had been living with a stigma.

Meanwhile, the negative issue concerning the challenger candidate was their financial misdeeds within the election process, influencing voters by giving money. In interviews with community and non-community informants, this study revealed a nominal fee of Rp 20,000 (1 euro) from parties or individuals who requested the community to vote for the challenger. Nevertheless, the Election Supervisory Board of Blitar Regency considered insufficient evidence of money politics.

EMOTIONAL CLOSENESS

This section begins by explaining the philosophy of Javanese leadership from two perspectives, the leader's and the people's, to show the importance of the closeness between a leader and people in Javanese culture. One of the most popular Javanese leadership philosophies (leader's point of view) is *Hasta Brata* (or *Astha Brata*), which are eight points of behavioural leadership advice for Javanese leaders (Endraswara 2013). *Hasta Brata* is oriented towards symbols of nature based on its characteristics: *surya* (sun), *candra* (moon), *kartika* (stars), *angkasa* (sky), *maruta* (wind), *samudra* (ocean), *dahana* (fire), and *bantala* (earth) (Achmad 2013). *Hasta Brata*'s leadership principles are mentioned in several ancient Javanese literary works, including *Serat Ramayana*, *Serat Ramajarwa*, *Serat Nitisruti*, *Serat Tumuruning Wahyu Maya* and *Serat Makutharama* (Endraswara 2013).

Amongst the eight behavioural principles of Javanese *Hasta Brata* leadership, the behaviour of *maruta/samirana* (wind) is relevant to explaining the importance of the closeness of leaders and people. Apart from that, Achmad (2013) mentions *laku mulat jatraning maruta*, meaning that leaders must behave like the wind, which blows in all directions, or “leaders must always be close to the people without discriminating against their degrees and dignity” (Achmad 2013: 23).

In different terms but with the same meaning, Endraswara (2013) mentions the behaviour of *hembeging samirana*, which indicates that leaders must behave carefully toward their people. They must be aware of the condition of their people based on their knowledge, not on rumours from subordinates. In essence, leaders must establish closeness to people to understand the concerns and complaints of the community.

From the people’s point of view, Javanese philosophy teaches *prasaja* leadership (modest) and *manjing ajur-ajer* (literally shattered). The *prasaja* principle encourages leaders to live a modest life according to their needs and abilities. An *ajer-ajer* leader is a person who is good at getting along with anyone, regardless of their social class, and people do not hesitate to approach them. The ability of a leader to get along with people from any social class is also a gift employed to persuade followers and sympathisers. Nevertheless, the leader must still have a firm political stance and attitude (Hardjowirogo 1989).

Another point of view is represented in the Javanese philosophy of *nguwongke wong*. In Javanese culture, the principle of *nguwongke wong* is to respect other people to maintain good relations with them. This philosophy teaches behaviour that avoids *mburu menange dhewe* (greed), *nggugu karepe dhewe* (following his/her own will), and *nuhoni benere dhewe* (rejecting the ideas of others in deference to one’s own) (Pasaribu and Yuwanto 2021).

In the custom of contemporary Javanese leadership, leaders practise *nguwongke wong* through direct interaction with all levels of society, especially people from the lower classes or those who tend to be marginalised. Regional heads in Java today want to make *blusukan* (impromptu visits), meet people face-to-face, greet and chat with people, and even listen to the complaints of marginalised residents, such as street vendors, fishermen, or peasants. This action shows that the leader respects everyone and is egalitarian in terms of leadership.

The practice of Javanese leadership that combines the two viewpoints of the leader (*hasta brata*) and the people (*prasaja*, *manjing ajur-ajer*, *nguwongke wong*) becomes an attraction for voters in elections. Moreover,

leaders perceived as close to the people indirectly persuade them to vote for them in elections, especially at the local level (*pilkada*).

Apart from Javanese philosophy, the Javanese are also familiar with Islam in everyday life. Islam is included in the Javanese religious system, as noted in Geertz's study (1960: 355): "Thus today the village religious system commonly consists of a balanced integration of animistic, *Hinduist*, and Islamic elements, a basic Javanese syncretism which is the island's true folk tradition, the basic substratum of its civilization".

Kodiran (1984) also confirms that Islam is present amongst the Javanese. He adds two categories of Javanese Islam: "Nevertheless, not everyone worships according to Islam, so based on the criteria for embracing their religion, there is what is called Islam *santri* and Islam *kejawen*".⁴

Explaining the context of Islam in Javanese life is important because religious positions are still relevant in explaining Javanese voting behaviour. However, in this study, Islam is not a determinant of vote choices. Instead, Islam is important in explaining the construction of the emotional closeness of challengers and voters. In the *pilkada*, emotional closeness can encourage Javanese voters to vote for the challenger and the incumbent.

The context of Islam in this study is the religious practice of the *tarekat* or *thoriqot* or *thariqah* (Sufi order), which constructs emotional closeness between the challenger candidate and their constituents. The pair of challenger candidates have close ties to the Thoriqot Agung Islamic Boarding School (*Pesulukan Thoreqot Agung* or PETA), based in Tulungagung Regency. The family of the regent candidate's husband (Mak Rini) is a close relative of the PETA leader. Meanwhile, KH Musa Ismail, Mak Rini's father, is also a figure at PETA and a politician who founded PKB in Blitar City. Even during the introduction of the PKB regional head candidate in Kediri (30 August 2020), Mak Rini was claimed to be part of the *Pondok* (Islamic Boarding School) PETA's network.⁵

The network forms the link of *tarekat* follower groups and covers the networks in Tulungagung and other places. Outside Tulungagung, the PETA's follower groups exist in Kediri (18), Blitar (35), Grobogan (38), Blora (47), Trenggalek (73), and other regions, namely Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Brebes, Jombang, Madiun, Jakarta-Bogor-Depok-Tangerang-Bekasi (Jabodetabek), Purwakarta, Karawang, Jember, Jepara, and East Kalimantan. Each group has a minimum of 25 active congregations (source: *Pondok* PETA's archive, quoted in Nurul 2014).

To strengthen its network, PETA established a special wing organisation named *Sultan Agung 78*, which acts as the secretary of PETA, whose main task is to record all the followers and worshippers across various regions and

compile their details in a database. *Sultan Agung 78* recorded the followers of the Syadziliyah congregation at *Pondok* PETA and registered those who (till April 2017) totalled 35,000 followers. The followers included about 2,500 followers in the Blitar regency and the city. Note that *Sultan Agung 78* coordinates several organisations: *Shafir Sultan Agung*, an institution for empowering congregations in the economic field; Community Learning Centre (*Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat* or PKBM), an institution for empowering congregations in the field of education; Sultan Panjalu Sakanegara, an institution that coordinates between institutions under the *Sultan Agung 78*; savings and loans cooperative (*Koperasi Simpan Pinjam* or KSP) PETA, an institution that empowers congregations in the field of savings and loans; Panjalu Epic, an organisation for facilitating congregations of undertaking haj and *umroh* (minor haj); and *sharia*-based financing body or *Baitul Maal wat Tamwil* (BMT) PETA. Equal to *Sultan Agung 78*, PETA established *Sultan Fatah 81*, an institution in charge of the *thariqah* activities for all congregations (As’ad 2017).

Emotional closeness was built through PETA *tarekat* activities organised by Mak Rini husband’s family at his Udanawu Sub-district, Blitar Regency residence. The typical (ritual) activities carried out by *Pondok* PETA Tulungagung were also carried out in the PETA *tarekat* network in Blitar, namely, the ritual of allegiance of worship, the practice of *maktūbah*, *riyādah laqad jā’akum*, and *khusūsiyah* (Musthofa 2017).⁶ In the ritual activities of the *tarekat*, there was an experience of emotional closeness among voters who were also followers of the *tarekat* (pupils) and the family of Mak Rini’s husband.

The closeness between challenger candidates and constituents is analogous to the relationship between *murshid* (teacher) and *murid* (pupils), as stated by an official from Makmur Village, who was interviewed on 3 September 2021: “Regarding conscience (vote), because as I said, *santri* (Islamic students) and *kyai* (Islamic teacher), students and teachers, that is why the term is that some of the *kyai* support the candidate. It seems like ducks are being herded. Yes, it is like that (the student’s choice follows the teacher’s choice) [...]. The reason for diverting (vote) is, as I said earlier, because of (the relationship) between students and teachers”.

The same opinion and experience were conveyed by local academics from the largest university in Blitar, as interviewed on 23 September 2021: “[...]. In the context of *thariqah*, when the *murshid* says A goes down (the congregation), it is still A. If you say B, all the way down, will say B”.

He added his experience in the same interview: “I know one of the *kyai thariqah* from Garum Sub-district. Yes, when I met him, he (delivered) in the conversation because of the order of *kyai* to vote for (the challenger). Yes, they forwarded this to the congregation (based on the orders of the *kyai* or *murshid*)”.

The relationship between teacher and pupils in *tarekat* activities is regulated by pupils’ polite manners toward their teacher. Atjeh (1985) explains that students have many manners in their relations with their teachers in the *Shadhiliyah* Order. Most importantly, students should not oppose but praise their teachers. The results of Musthofa’s (2017) study on teacher and pupil relations at *Pondok* PETA reveal the same situation. When a pupil takes an oath of allegiance to a teacher in the *tarekat*, the pupil has already formed a bond with the *tarekat*. This bond relates not only to ritual aspects but also to the congregation’s perspective and attitude toward life as well as code of ethics. At the same time, when a person becomes a pupil of the *tarekat*, the *murshid* becomes a spiritual parent and the *murid*’s servant (Musthofa 2017).

Makmur Village, located in Udanawu Sub-district, Blitar Regency, is an example of a village that strongly influences the practices and institutions of the *tarekat*. According to an informant’s claim, 75% of the population of Makmur Village are followers of the *Shadhiliyah* Order. A village official confirmed this statement in an interview on 3 September 2021.

In the 2020 *pilkada*, this village was the largest votes barn (constituency) for the challenger in Blitar Regency. The challenger gained 80.4% of the winning margin. At the interview location, which is the polling station (*tempat pemungutan suara* or TPS) area 5, the challenger candidates gained the highest margin of victory amongst the other five TPS in Makmur Village (87.98%).⁷

The voters’ explanations reveal that the vote shift from the incumbent to the challenger is due to emotional closeness. Interviewed on 3 September 2021, a male voter, a 49-year-old elementary school-educated farmer who was lived in Makmur Village since birth, said: “That is not my reason. Because of Mak Rini, I followed the family (Mak Rini’s family). I joined the *kumpulan* (*tarekat*). It is like the person (Mak Rini) is my own family. So, (I) consider the *Thariqah* family, sir. Suppose that (Mak Rini) is our *kyai*’s daughter”.

“Indeed, I joined *Thariqah Tulungagung* (PETA)”.

“If (Mak Rini) won at Makmur, I think it is reasonable. It is because 75% (Makmur’s Villagers) are *thariqah*, that is, *Shadhiliyah*”.⁸

A female voter conveyed a similar reason for her proximity to the challenger; she too had participated in *tarekat* activities (PETA). This voter is a housewife and a junior high school graduate who has lived in Makmur Village since 2003. In addition, this woman feels close to the challenger regent candidate because they were both active in Muslimat NU (the NU's Women's wing). She said in the interview on 3 September 2021: "Mak Rini is NU. We are NU people. Many Muslimat (members) are here. It is my own opinion".

Emotional closeness is also considered in terms of the similarities in organisational identity between challenger candidates and voters, specifically, the similarities of the identity of MBO NU. As observed in interviews and media reports, the challenger regent candidate has an active family in the NU. Even Mak Rini's father is listed as one of the founders of PKB⁹ in Blitar City. An NU figure from Blitar Regency called Mak Rini the cadre of NU. The similarities in voters' identity were mainly driven by the open support of Muslimat NU and Fatayat NU (the women's wings of NU) for the challenger candidate pair.¹⁰

The involvement of *tarekat* movements in politics is not a new phenomenon. Several studies explain the *tarekat*'s involvement in anti-colonial movements in the pre-independence era (Bruinessen 1992, 1994; Ricklefs 2008 as cited in Fealy and White 2008). From the colonial officials' point of view on *tarekat*, Bruinessen (1992) explains that pupils' fanatical about the teacher can easily turn into political fanaticism.

In the post-independence period, the involvement of the *tarekat* movement in politics depended on the political behaviour of teachers to keep their distance or otherwise become involved in politics. A well-known example is the case of *Kyai* Haji Muhammad Shiddiq, a *murshid* of the *Qodiriyah wa Naqsabandiyah tarekat* who had many *murids*. He contributed to the success of the Golkar Party in Kudus from 1977 until the reform order (Mu'min 2014). KH Mustain Ramli, a *murshid* of the *Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah tarekat* at the Darul Ulum Peterongan Islamic Boarding School, Rejoso (Jombang), is an example of the *tarekat murshid*'s political involvement in electoral politics. KH Mustain Ramli joined the *Golkar* Party in the pre-reform period (Bruinessen 1992; Ni'am 2016; Al-Abza et al. 2019).

The *tarekat*'s electoral political involvement also occurs in the *pilkada*. Muhammad (2018) revealed three reasons for the involvement of the *Qadiriyyah tarekat* in supporting the candidate pair Anwar Adnan Saleh–Amri Sanusi in the 2006 West Sulawesi *pilkada*. First, the leader of the *tarekat*, Sheikh K. H. Muhammad Shaleh, had political experience with *Golkar*. Correspondingly,

there is a close relationship between *tarekat murshid* and the gubernatorial candidate Anwar Adnan Saleh. Finally, the *tarekat murshid-murid* relationship requires the *murid*'s obedience to their *murshid*.

The same case was discovered in the 2011 Majene Regency *pilkada*. The *Qadiriyyah tarekat* actively supported the candidate pair Kalma Katta–Fahmi Massiara. *Tarekat* followers who tend to obey their teachers encourage the same political preferences. The direction of the *tarekat, murshid* (teacher) was a main consideration in determining vote choice in the Majene *pilkada* (Arsyad 2014). Based on these two studies, the electoral politics of the *tarekat* in the *pilkada* still relies on the teacher-pupil relationship.

In the case of the 2020 Blitar *pilkada*, the *tarekat*'s involvement in electoral politics is also quite clear. In addition to information from local voters and academics, several online media reports confirmed the closeness between the challenger and the *Pondok* PETA Tulungagung's network. The challenger regent candidate is known to have close family ties to *Pondok* PETA. One report mentions the family closeness of the challenger candidate's husband to the *Pondok*: "Even though she was born as the daughter of one of the founders of *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PKB) in Blitar City, in the political world, Rini Syarifah is a newcomer. The woman born in 1977 was previously mostly involved as a book and clothing industry entrepreneur".

"Her husband is also a close relative of the *Pesulukan Thoregot Agung* (PETA) based in Tulungagung Regency. Meanwhile, her pair of candidacy, namely *Cawabup* (vice-regent candidate) Rachmad Santoso, has a background as a legal practitioner. Makde Rachmad, also a pupil of *Pondok* PETA Tulungagung, is the General Chair of the Indonesian Legal Advisory Association (IPHI)".¹¹

Other news reported the involvement of *Pondok* PETA: "Rahmat Santoso, the candidate for deputy regent of Blitar who was supported by PKB, PAN, and PKS, admitted that he was appointed as a candidate by *Kyai Pondok* PETA Tulungagung, who is now under the care of *Kyai* Abdul Djalil Mustaqiem's son, Charir Mohamad Sholahudin Al Ayyubi (Gus Saladien), with the slogan 'progress together and prosper together with the community'".

"I was nominated on the orders of *Kyai*, so because I am a *santri*, I followed orders to be ready to carry out my duties as a candidate for deputy regent of Blitar", said Rahmat Santoso.¹²

Although it was not explicitly stated that *Pondok* PETA was involved in supporting the contestant pair, some interviews confirmed the role of its electoral politics. One online media source reported that the movement's strategy was "silent" during the election. Operationally, this network goes

down to the *rukun tetangga* (RT or neighbourhood unit) or the smallest community unit to identify people's aspirations with two teams, the *Baret Merah* (*Barisan RT Mak Rini-Makdhe Rahmat*/the neighbourhood front of Mak Rini-Makdhe Rahmat) and *Brigade* (*Barisan Garda Desa*/the front of the village guard).

The *Baret Merah* detected the current condition of the community at the neighbourhood level. Therefore, this team acted silently to find out the villagers' aspirations. This team even went as far as to enter the bases of the PDIP constituents, loyal voters of the incumbent candidate. Meanwhile, the *Brigade* team coordinated *Baret Merah* so that they could open access for the winning team or volunteer in the locations of potential constituents. In addition to knowing the conditions and issues circulated at the lowest level, the important contribution of the two teams was trying to build close relations between voters and challenger candidates.

This study seeks to understand the teacher-pupil relationship amongst Javanese voters as not only relying on pupils' obedience to the teacher. Emotional closeness as part of the extended family of the *tarekat* and simultaneously having a direct family relationship with the challenger candidate motivate the shift of votes from the incumbent to the challenger candidate.

Hence, emotional closeness is built upon two elements, the similarities in terms of voters' participation in activities and the *tarekat* network, which has direct family ties with the pair of challenger candidates. Another element is the similarities in group identity between voters and community organisations like NU that support the challenger.¹³

Interestingly, the same logic was applied when voting for the incumbent. Interviews in Tentrem Village (pseudonym), Bakung Sub-district, revealed strong emotional closeness between the incumbent and their constituents. As a result, Bakung Sub-district is the constituency where the incumbent gained the most votes in the regency (54.04%). Meanwhile, the incumbent gained more votes in Tentrem Village (69.19%) than in other villages in Bakung.

The incumbent's landslide victory in the village was caused by the emotional closeness between the incumbent regent (Rijanto) and the villagers. During the interview (9 September 2021), all interviewees revealed and confirmed that the incumbent had a strong historical relationship with the villagers. Tentrem Village was the location of the incumbent's first civil servant (*Pegawai Negeri Sipil* or PNS) assignment. The incumbent had also lived in Tentrem Village and maintained good relations with the villagers until he became the regent (2015–2020).

The close relationship between the incumbent and the villagers colours the logic of voting choice. It can explain why Tentrem Village is the biggest votes barn in Bakung Sub-district for the incumbent. A 50-year-old male voter, an administrator of *rukun warga* (RW or community unit) 03 and owner of a transportation service business who has lived in the village since birth, explained his reasons when interviewed on 9 September 2021: “Suppose you find a better one (candidate), then the better one will be chosen. I do not consider the vice-regent candidate, only focusing on Mr Riyanto. Suppose Mak Rini’s team visited the village. The residents here have no problem because the people’s trust in Pak Riyanto is already quite high. The people here are also open. Although Mak Rini’s team came, there was no effect. Residents also do not mind (accepting) that the winner is not Pak Riyanto; if it is better, it is fine”.

Apart from being close to the incumbent, residents also expect that if the incumbent is re-elected as regent, they will provide “benefits” for the village. A 63-year-old male voter informant who is a resident of RW 03 and a farmer who has lived in Tentrem Village since his birth, said when interviewed on 9 September 2021: “Indeed, Pak Riyanto has always been famous in Tentrem Village. He is famous because Mr Riyanto is active in the organisation. We feel close to Pak Riyanto because Pak Riyanto comes from us. We vote for the people closest to us to make it easier to report if there is a problem”.

Another informant, a 60-year-old male voter who is an administrator of RT 03, has a farm, is an art activist, and has lived in Tentrem Village since birth, added when interviewed on 9 September 2021: “Apart from having lived in Tentrem for a long time, the people here already believe and have high expectations (for the incumbent) to become regent. Suppose people need permission; it will be easier, especially on *hajatan* (celebration agendas). In addition, Mr Riyanto facilitates regional arts. Therefore, the people’s wishes can be realised if Mr. Riyanto becomes the leader. The artistic activities here include *ludruk* (traditional Javanese comedy), *ketoprak* (Javanese theatrical genre), and *jaranan* (Javanese horse dance)”.

For the incumbent, these statements indicate the importance of closeness between the candidate and the electorate, which can prevent the shift of votes to the challenger. The personal emotional closeness between the incumbent and their constituents explains why the incumbent gained more votes in Tentrem Village than in other villages in Blitar Regency. Furthermore, from the last statement appears that in addition to the reasons for the emotional closeness, constituents of TPS area 5 also expect ease of access to the incumbent if he is re-elected. Therefore, it demonstrates the non-emotional closeness motives of villagers to vote for the incumbent.

The analysis of emotional closeness as the reason of voting for candidates, both challengers and incumbents, in the *pilkada* enrich the logic of Javanese voting behaviour, in which religious and ethnic motives have dominated. Emotional closeness is also explained in the Javanese philosophical construction of the relationship between people and the leader. The Javanese philosophical points of view of the leader (*hasta brata*) and the people (*prasaja, manjing ajur-ajer, nguwongke wong*) consider the importance of closeness between leader and people.

OTHER REASONS FOR VOTE SHIFTING

In addition to the emotional closeness between the challenger candidate and the voter, this study uncovers some motives for ballots being diverted from the incumbent to the challenger. First are the reasons for evaluating incumbent candidates. The low level of satisfaction with the incumbent's performance encourages the desire for changes in regional conditions through the change of regional heads. In the interview on 23 September 2021, an incumbent consultant team member revealed poll results that demonstrated that satisfaction with the incumbent candidate's performance was less than 50%.

Second is the voters' negative perception of the incumbent deputy regent candidate, suspected to have violated ethical leadership values. Positive perceptions of the incumbent regent candidate could not withstand the vote shifting because of the negative image of the incumbent deputy regent candidate perceived by voters. For example, a 43-year-old male voter who lives in RT 03 RW 03 Sumberbendo Village is a *mlijo* (vegetable hawker) with a junior high school education and is active in community and development activities in his neighbourhood. Interviewed on 26 August 2021, he mentioned a short reason for not voting for the incumbent due to disagreement with the incumbent deputy regent candidate.

Another interview on 26 August 2021 in Sumberbendo Village with a female voter who lives in RT 03 RW 03, has a high school education, and is active in early childhood education institutions, clarified what is meant by the disagreement with the candidate for deputy regent: "I personally voted for Pak Riyanto because he was the (former) head of the Education Office. But people shift their votes from (because of) the deputy (Marhaenis). The deputy is not that good. Mr Riyanto is a good person, but not the deputy".

A female Sumberbendo Village official conveyed a similar opinion, strengthening the “effect” of the candidate for deputy regent, which changed the decision to vote for the incumbent, interviewed on 26 August 2021. She stated: “The people are happy with Pak Riyanto. The relationship is good, and the work is good. But there is a problem with his deputy, Mr Marhaenis. As a religious person (Islam), I do not like it, like the others”.

Although not exposed to the media, the “ethical” issues of the incumbent deputy regent have been known publicly and framed voters’ perceptions. The issues prompted the decision to vote, shifting to the challenger. The incumbent consultant team, interviewed on 23 September 2021, acknowledged the massive circulation of negative or black campaigns regarding the “bad” image of the incumbent deputy regent candidate. This image is in contrast to the image of the incumbent regent candidate, whom voters perceive as *tiyang sae* (a good person).

Third is voting mobilisation via vote buying. Although it is difficult to prove legally, this study finds allegations of money politics in terms of *uang jalan* (cost of the trip) for voters. Voters’ confessions during interviews and media coverage¹⁴ reveal that the practice of money politics can influence voting decisions, especially voting for the challenger.

One of the Blitar Regency *Bawaslu* (the local election supervisory board) commissioners confirmed the voter informant’s statement regarding the practice of money politics that encouraged vote shifting from the incumbent to the challenger even though there was not enough supporting evidence. Interviewed on 19 August 2021, the commissioner said: “Based on reports reported here (*Bawaslu*), there are allegations of money politics. But no adequate evidence in the verification. Is there any cheating (violation)? Needs to be dug up again”.

The incumbent consulting team members interviewed on 23 September 2021 confirmed the effectiveness of money politics in influencing the shift of votes to the challenger. One of the reasons is that the 2020 *pilkada* was close to the 2019 legislative election and the Concurrent Village Head Election of Blitar Regency, where the practice of vote buying was suspected. Consequently, the transactional situation effectively directed votes in the 2020 *pilkada*.

In the analysis of Javanese voters, this study extends the previous explanation that the logic of Javanese voters is not limited to religious and ethnic orientations. The emotional closeness between voters and candidates built through activities and networks of *tarekat* and MBO and the experience of interacting directly with candidates show the psychological aspect of the explanation of Javanese voters. The decision to vote for the challenger and

incumbent candidates is not due to the similarities in religion, social status, supporting political parties, issues, or even the candidate's ideal characteristics. However, it is encouraged by the effective relationship between voters and candidates.

Contrasting situations in local electoral politics also indicate the worth of the emotional bond. The challenger [who was supported by only 34.0% of coalition seats in the local legislature (31.7% of votes)] defeated the incumbent, who was supported by the majority of seats (66.0% or 65.8% of ballots). Here, voters did not decide analogous vote choices for parties. Instead, some followed their emotional closeness with the challenger and the incumbent.

The emotional closeness between voters and candidates corresponds to the Javanese leadership philosophy. From the leader's point of view, it presents the behaviour of leaders to be like the wind (*maruta/samirana*) that blows everywhere. It is analogous to a leader who is less distant from his people. From the people's point of view, emotional closeness indicates the values of *prasaja*, *manjing ajur-ajer*, and *nguwongke wong*, which follow the wishes of Javanese voters. Thus, the consideration of voting for a candidate in the *pilkada* because of emotional closeness between voters and the candidate finds its roots in Javanese cultural values.

Understanding Javanese voters requires the consideration of the emotional closeness between voters and candidates in addition to religious and ethnic factors.

CANDIDATE ORIENTATIONS OR CANDIDATE ID

This study establishes Javanese voting behaviour and indicates vote-switching logic due to emotional closeness between voters and candidates. Voters can make academic contributions to the theory of voting behaviour. The mapping of the theoretical model of voting behaviour by Oscar Gabriel (2020) is very helpful in explaining the taxonomy of the theory. There are three theoretical models: the sociological, the socio-psychological, and the psychological.

The sociological model consists of a micro-sociological approach and a macro-sociological approach. Other than that, the micro-sociological approach emphasises individual social characteristics and contextual factors influencing electoral choices. Some examples of independent variables are social, economic status, religion, residence, occupation, and age. This micro approach refers mainly to the works of Lazarsfeld et al. (1944).

The macro-sociological approach, also known as the Cleavage Theory, refers primarily to the study of Lipset and Rokkan (1967). Cleavage is a vital concept described as “durable political divisions that are rooted in the structure of a society and finds their expression in the party system” (Gabriel 2020). Separation in the structure of society forms differences in political, party-based preferences. In the case of the European party system, two types of cleavage can be distinguished: socio-cultural cleavage (centre-periphery and state-church; conflicts focus on values and group identities) and socio-economic cleavage (urban-rural and labour-capital; state vs market and shape and size of the welfare state).

The socio-psychological model is constructed mainly by Campbell et al. (1960 as cited in Gabriel 2020), who focus on citizens’ political attitudes towards parties and candidates in electoral competition. These political attitudes occupy an intermediate position (intermediate variable) between exogenous independent factors (historical, social, and contextual) and voting behaviour. Apart from that, three political attitudes explain electoral choices: party ID (the stable affective link between individuals and a political party), issue orientations (voters’ preference for parties or candidates due to their competencies in dealing with public policy matters and their policy positions, and candidate orientations (relevant candidates’ traits: competence, integrity, strong leadership, and problem-solving capacities) (Gabriel 2020).

The psychological model of electoral choices is based on the premise of the impact of information processing on the vote. This processing consists of two approaches, the cognitive approach and the motivated reasoning approach. The first approach has the fundamental premise that political information processing precedes voting choices. The approach utilises the logic of the role of information costs in making political judgements, which is the basis for rational choice analysis. The first approach consists of fully informed voters (Downs 1957 as cited in Gabriel 2020), ideological reasoning (Converse 1964 as cited in Gabriel 2020), central routes of information processing (Mutz 2007 as cited in Gabriel 2020), and joyful behaviours in a decisional situation (Mutz 2007 and Redlawsk and Pierce 2017 as cited in Gabriel 2020).

The second approach, the theory of motivated reasoning, departs from the premise that people differently handle information processing when making decisions. This difference occurs because of information weighting processing between accuracy (information) and directional goals (tendency) (Lodge and Taber 2000 as cited in Gabriel 2020). In real political situations, voters treat any information as affectively charged. As a result, they often do not follow the ideal model of rational decision-makers. Instead, voters follow predispositions, select information, simplify decision-making situations, and

seek justification before evaluating the available alternatives (Gabriel 2020). This approach consists of ignorant voters (Downs 1957 as cited in Gabriel 2020), party ID (Campbell et al. 1960 as cited in Gabriel 2020), peripheral routes of information processing (Mutz 2007 as cited in Gabriel 2020), and threatening behaviours in a decisional situation (Mutz 2007 and Redlawsk and Pierce 2017 as cited in Gabriel 2020).

This study establishes arguments for emotional closeness as one of the reasons for the Javanese vote choice, constructed from two situations. The first is the similarities in (voters) participation in *tarekat* activities and networks that have a special relationship with the challenger candidate, and the similarities in communal identity between voters and the MBO, which support the challenger. The second is the experience of direct interaction between voters and the incumbent, which builds emotional closeness and becomes the reason for voting.

This finding has the potential to contribute to the theory of voting behaviour. However, the sociological model does not entirely cover emotional closeness as a reason for voting. The similarities between activities and religious networks (*tarekat*) and MBO are exogenous factors that encourage the shifting of votes to the challenger, including constructing teacher-pupil relations (micro). Meanwhile, the MBO activities and networks between voters and challenger regent candidates shows similarities in group identity (macro). However, this study determines the importance of direct interaction experiences between Javanese voters and the incumbent in preventing vote shifting. This experience demonstrates emotional factors that come from voters, not exogenous factors. Furthermore, the reason for the emotional closeness between voters and candidates does not indicate a political division amongst voters that encourages vote shifting and the decision to keep voting for the incumbent candidate.

The socio-psychological model in the form of political attitudes towards parties, issues, and candidates as an intermediary between exogenous factors and vote choice cannot fully explain the reasons for emotional closeness. Other than that, the similarity of activities and networks of *tarekat* and MBO between voters and the challenger candidate presents an effective link between individual voters and the candidate. The link is constructed through *tarekat* activities, networks, and group identity (i.e., MBO). Thus, it echoes the worth of an effective link in party ID. However, the link does not involve parties but candidates. Moreover, the experience of direct interaction between constituents and the incumbent does not show the importance of considering relevant candidate traits as electoral judgements. Instead, it demonstrates an effective link between the incumbent candidate and his constituents.

The argument for emotional closeness between voters and candidates demonstrates the importance of explaining the processing of information about challenger candidates and their families for those who do vote shifting. Activities and involvement in *tarekat* and MBO networks that support the challenger encourage voters to rely on selective information about the challenger. As a result, voters seek to simplify decision-making based on this selective information. The obedience of pupils to the teacher in the teachings of the *tarekat* becomes the justification for the decision to vote for the challenger.

Meanwhile, the experience of direct interaction between constituents and incumbent candidates shows that information about incumbent candidates does not always require the media to deliver information. To ensure the decision to keep voting for the incumbent, voters rely on direct contact with the incumbent. The experience of meeting and talking directly with the incumbent strengthens Javanese voters' decision not to shift the ballots to the challenger.

CONCLUSION

Efforts to explain Javanese voting behaviour have been conducted through several studies since the post-independence era (the last election was in 2019). However, most previous research focused on religion and ethnicity as determinants of Javanese voting choices.

This study finds that the logic of Javanese voters (living in rural areas) also considers the psychological aspect of emotional closeness between voters and candidates. Although emotional closeness is constructed through religious practice, religion is not the main driver of vote choices. The similarity of activities in the *tarekat* network, group identity (MBO), and the experience of interacting directly with the candidate construct emotional closeness.

Other than that, this study extends the sociological model of voting behaviour theory. The emotional closeness from internal voters corrects social logic, which explains the strong contribution of exogenous factors.

This study expands the analogy of the affective link of party ID in socio-psychological models, in which the link involves candidates, not parties. Thus, it proposes the concept of candidate ID, not party ID or candidate orientation. Moreover, the experience of direct interaction between constituents and candidates broadens the consideration of relevant candidate traits as factors in

electoral judgements. Regarding Javanese voters, leaders who have emotional closeness by practicing *prasaja*, *ajur-ajer*, and *nguwongke wong* leadership deserve to be elected.

Meanwhile, direct interaction experience corrects the role of media in information processing. For example, voters rely on direct contact, meetings, and communication to convince constituents to keep voting for the incumbent.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank all informants in the three villages where the study was conducted intensively, the regional general election commission (KPUD) and *Bawaslu* of Blitar Regency, journalists, political consultants, and academics who welcomed and supported the study with fruitful information. This work was supported by the 2021 Research Grant of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP) Universitas Brawijaya (grant number 98/UN10.F11/PN2/2021). The content of the article and the views and opinions it contains is the author's full responsibility.

COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

The author has obtained consent from all the informants for participation in the interview process. The author used pseudonyms for participants and villages to comply with the ethical standards.

NOTES

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- ¹ The 2020 census did not release ethnic-based population percentages.

- ² Source: <https://www.blitarkab.go.id/kondisi-umum-wilayah-kabupaten-blitar/> (accessed 16 October 2021).
- ³ The incumbent candidate pair is supported by the coalition of 33 seats (66%) in the local legislature. In contrast, the challenger candidate pair is supported by the coalition of 17 seats (34%).
- ⁴ Islamic santri is a Javanese Muslim who is obedient and regularly carries out Islamic teachings. A *kejawan* Muslim believes in the Islamic faith, in God (*Gusti* Allah) and in the Prophet Muhammad (*Kanjeng Nabi*). However, they do not regularly pray, fast, or aspire to go to Hajj (Kodiran 1984).
- ⁵ Source: <https://lenteratoday.com/dpp-pkb-rekom-mak-rini-santoso-pada-pilbup-blitar/> (accessed 30 March 2021). The relationship between Mak Rini's husband and the leader of Pondok PETA and the position of KH Musa Ismail, Mak Rini's father, as the leader of the *Tarekat Shadhiliyah* (PETA) in Blitar Raya was confirmed by academics from the largest university in Blitar in an interview on 23 September 2021. PETA is known as a *pesantren*, which teaches the *Shādhilīyah* (*Syadziliyah*) Order. However, PETA actually teaches two other *tarekat*, namely *Qādirīyah wa Naqshabandīyah* and *Naqshabandīyah* (Mustofha 2017).
- ⁶ In Sufi order, the practice of *maktūbah* is a predetermined spiritual practice on the path towards closeness to God; *riyādah* is a means of attaining closeness to God by practicing self-discipline and purification of the heart and soul; *khusūsīyah* is the specific practices that are unique to a Sufi order and they are kept secret or only revealed to members of the order.
- ⁷ Based on the 2020 *pilkada* vote recapitulation data, the challenger candidate gained the largest percentage of votes in Udanawu Sub-district (76.7%). The margin of victory compared with the incumbents was 53.4%.
- ⁸ The same reason for voting for the challenger candidate because of emotional closeness, being active in *tarekat* activities (PETA), was conveyed by the following male voters: head of RT 03 RW 05, 56 years old, educated in elementary school, trade and farm labour, and has lived in Makmur Village for 30 years (interview on 3 September 2021); has lived in RT 01 RW 05 since birth, 50 years old, high school graduate, works as a duck breeder (interview on 3 September 2021).
- ⁹ Note that PKB is a political party founded by and is the political representation of NU (Nahdliyin) members.
- ¹⁰ Evidence of support from NU's wing organisations (Muslimat and Fatayat) and statements by an NU figure that the challenger regent candidate is an NU cadre can be accessed from online media coverage at the following links: <https://beritalangit.net/bergelombang-fatayat-blitar-dukung-mak-rini-makdhe-rahmat/> (accessed 10 September 2021); <https://beritalangit.net/menguat-barisan-muslimat-dukung-mak-rini-makdhe-rahmat/> (accessed 10 September 2021).
- ¹¹ Sources: <https://daerah.sindonews.com/read/263600/704/porak-porandakan-kandang-banteng-blitar-ini-gelombang-perubahan-yang-bakal-diusung-mak-rini-1607591561/10> (accessed 5 December 2021); <https://lenteratoday.com/peringati-hari-santri-pkb-blitar-gelar-khataman-al-quran-dihadiri-cawabup-makdhe-rahmat/> (accessed 5 December 2021).
- ¹² Source: <https://www.harianbhirawa.co.id/rijanto-marhaenis-siap-bertarung-dengan-rini-santoso-di-pilkada-blitar/> (accessed 5 December 2021).

- ¹³ Commissioner 2 of the KPU also explained the fact that the supporters of the challenger from the MBO Muhammadiyah (indirectly associated with the National Mandate Party, which supported the challenger candidate for Deputy Regent), were in Tumpang Village and Kendalrejo Village, Talun Sub-district. Muhammadiyah's followers contributed to the victory of the challenger candidates in the two villages (interview on 9 September 2021). The recap of the results of the 2020 Blitar Regency *Pilkada* posted on the KPU's website shows that the incumbent candidate gained the most ballots in Talun Sub-district, winning 53.6% (18,883 votes). However, the challenger candidates in Tumpang Village and Kendalrejo Village, which were supported by voters from the Muhammadiyah, won 68.00% (1,931 votes) and 60.13% (3,297 votes), which were the biggest victories relative to other villages. These data confirm the emotional closeness of voters from Muhammadiyah circles and the challenger. The data were downloaded from <https://pilkada2020.kpu.go.id/#/pkwkk/tungsur/350514> on 5 April 2021.
- ¹⁴ Some media covered money politics practices. They can be accessed via the following links: <https://jatimtimes.com/baca/230611/20201207/163100/pelaku-politik-uang-di-kabupaten-blitar-tertangkap-di-dua-kecamatan> (accessed 5 March 2021); <https://daerah.sindonews.com/read/264976/704/bukti-lemah-laporan-dugaan-politik-uang-di-pilkada-blitar-dikembalikan-1607685174> (accessed 5 March 2021); <https://faktualnews.co/2020/12/07/bawaslu-blitar-selidiki-video-politik-uang-di-blitar/246121/> (accessed 5 March 2021); <https://mediablitar.pikiran-rakyat.com/nasional/pr-321066204/pilkada-2020-semakin-dekat-bawaslu-temukan-kasus-dugaan-politik-uang-dan-pelanggaran-lainnya> (accessed 5 March 2021); <https://www.timesindonesia.co.id/read/news/314369/tim-pemenangan-paslou-no-urut-1-akan-laporkan-temuan-politik-uang-di-pilbup-blitar> (accessed 5 March 2021); <https://duta.co/jual-beli-suara-di-pilkada-bupati-blitar-banyak-money-politik-terjadi> (accessed 5 March 2021).

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