

THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SHAPING THE POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS OF STUDENTS, STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF NORTH SUMATRA

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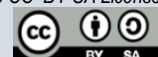
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ABSTRACT

Higher education serves a fundamental role that extends far beyond the mechanistic boundaries of technical knowledge transfer, acting instead as a primary engine in reconstructing the critical consciousness and political aspirations of students, particularly female students within State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN). This study aims to comprehensively dissect how the academic and social ecosystem at the State Islamic University (UIN) of North Sumatra influences the trajectory of female students' political aspirations amidst the intersection of conventional theological doctrines and contemporary liberal democratic demands. Utilizing a qualitative paradigm with a phenomenological approach, this research seeks to capture the essence of female students' lived experiences in navigating campus power structures through in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants. Data analysis was conducted using triangulation techniques involving 30 scientific references to ensure interpretative validity over the narratives generated from the research field. Empirical findings indicate that progressive fiqh siyasah-based curriculum interventions and participation in student organizations have successfully transformed apathy into active political agency, despite systemic resistance from remnants of patriarchal culture that legitimize women's subordination through narrow interpretations of sacred texts. The study also reveals a "agency transition" phenomenon where female students have begun utilizing digital literacy as an instrument of resistance against political marginalization within the campus public sphere. This research concludes that strengthening gender-justice-oriented political education must be synergized with concrete institutional affirmative policies to ensure that the leadership potential of female students is not eroded by rigid patriarchal morality standards.

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INTRODUCTION

The discourse on women's leadership in global politics has undergone significant development and is now seen as an indicator of democratic progress (Zein, 2024). Although women have occupied many strategic positions, the gap in access to decision-making is still a challenge. In line with the SDGs agenda on quality education and gender equality, women's involvement in politics not only aims to meet quotas, but also ensures the realization of fair and inclusive public policies (Nafisa et al., 2025).

In this context, higher education has a strategic role in breaking gender stereotypes through an emancipatory curriculum and an academic environment that supports the development of students' political self-efficacy (Haryono & Sheridan, 2025). Female students as an intellectual group have great potential to challenge the dominance of masculinity in the process of political socialization. However, without adequate structural support, women's political aspirations will remain hampered by social norms that are no longer relevant (Nafisa et al., 2025).

In Indonesia, patriarchal culture is still the main obstacle to women's political participation (Halizah & Faralita, 2023). The dominance of men in the organizational recruitment and decision-making process often places women only as political objects, not main actors (Aula, 2023). In addition, the stigmatization of women who are vocal also creates psychological and sociological barriers that hinder the development of women's leadership in the academic environment.

In a broader and moderate Islamic theological perspective, women's political participation is actually a sacred mandate rooted in the concept of human equality as a caliph on earth. Islam has never distinguished the obligations of men and women in upholding justice and performing *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* in public spaces. This normative foundation is explicitly stated in the Qur'an Surah At-Taubah verse 71:

And those who believe, and those who believe, and those who do not believe in the Prophet, and who are the Messengers of Allah, and those who do not believe in the Messenger of Allah, the Most Merciful.

Meaning: "And the believers, men and women, some of them are helpers to others. They enjoin (do) makruf and prevent (doing) disobedience, enforce prayer, pay zakat, and obey Allah and His Messenger. They will be blessed by Allah. Indeed, Allah is Mighty and Wise." (QS. At-Taubah: 71).

The concept of *awliya* in QS. At-Taubah verse 71 affirms partnership and equal responsibility between men and women in Islamic socio-political life (Cahyani et al., 2025). This principle should be the basis for PTKIN in building an inclusive campus political ecosystem. However, patriarchal interpretations of religious texts still often limit women's leadership in the public sphere (Febriansyah et al., 2025). Therefore, Islamic higher education needs to integrate the value of gender justice through contextual hermeneutic approaches so that female students have a strong theological legitimacy to participate in politics (Afrilia & Fauzan, 2026).

UIN North Sumatra (UINSU) has a strategic position in shaping the political awareness of female students through organizational interaction and Fiqih Siyasah learning which encourages increased awareness of law and democracy (Hati & Wardi, 2024; Aritonang et al., 2025; Nurana et al., 2025). However, the resistance of conservative groups and the lack of optimal affirmative policies in student organizations are still challenges (Suryana et al., 2022). Therefore, strengthening the political empowerment of female students is important for the future of moderate and just Islamic democracy (Muzakar, 2019; Setiawan & Ninawati, 2023).

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of the sociology of Islamic education and politics, especially related to the relationship between higher education, political socialization, and the political identity of female students (Rafiq et al., 2025). Practically, the results of the research are expected to be input for UINSU in formulating more inclusive policies for women's political participation (Za & Yunita, 2022). In contrast to previous research that still focused on student political participation in general (Al Hamid, 2025), this study offers

novelty through the integration of phenomenological approaches and the analysis of emancipatory religious texts to understand the transformation of political agency of PTKIN students (Engzelli S. et al., 2025). This research is important to support the realization of gender-equitable higher education and moderate Muslim women's leadership with integrity (Nurrohman et al., 2023).

Literature Review

Women's Political Participation in the Siyash Perspective

The discourse on women's political participation in Islam is the result of a dialectic between normative texts and sociopolitical reality. In the perspective *offiqh siyasah*, women's involvement in the public sphere is seen as a manifestation of the caliphate's mandate that does not discriminate essentially between genders (Al Hamid, 2025). Politics is understood as a form of social worship to realize *maqashid al-shari'ah* through the enforcement of justice and benefits (Sulistiyawati & Yamani, 2025). Therefore, the political aspirations of female students are a form of moral responsibility in determining the direction of social and legal policies.

Contemporary hermeneutics towards QS. At-Taubah verse 71 emphasizes that *the mandate of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* is cross-gender through the concept of *awliya* which means partnership and leadership synergy (Cahyani et al., 2025). However, patriarchal bias in the interpretation of QS. An-Nisa verse 34 is still often used to limit women's leadership (Febriansyah et al., 2025). In fact, the concept of *qawwam* is more appropriately understood as a functional responsibility, not an ontological restriction on women (Rafiq et al., 2025). The reinterpretation of Al-Mawardi's thought also shows that modern leadership is determined more by competence, integrity, and intellectual capacity than gender (Maulana et al., 2025). Therefore, political education in Islamic institutions plays an important role in building theological legitimacy for female political participation.

In addition, the *principles of shura* in QS. Ash-Shura verse 38 emphasizes the importance of deliberation that involves all members of society without discrimination (Fajar & Sugirman, 2024). The involvement of female students in campus decision-making has theological legitimacy as well as substantive value in realizing the common good (Fikriana & Syakban, 2024). Women's political participation is also an effort to realize gender justice and fight discrimination in the name of religion (Hasanah & Suprianik, 2019). Therefore, the reconstruction of Islamic political thought in higher education is an important prerequisite for producing a generation of Muslim women who have strong, moderate, and integrity political agencies (Afrilia & Fauzan, 2026).

Gender Construction and Patriarchal Culture in the Academic Environment

The sociocultural structure in Islamic Religious Universities (PTKI) is still influenced by patriarchal culture that places female students in peripheral positions in campus politics (Halizah & Faralita, 2023). Gender constructions tend to associate men with leadership, while women are directed to administrative or domestic roles, thus limiting the development of female students' leadership potential (Aula, 2023). This condition is reinforced by conservative religious interpretations that are often a tool of social control over women, so that vocal female students are often stigmatized and experience psychological obstacles in expressing their political aspirations (Swastini et al., 2025; Rasyidin & Aruni, 2016).

Inequality of access to political resources on campus also reflects structural injustices. In PEMIRA, female students are often only used as quota fulfillers without gaining a substantive role in decision-making (Za & Yunita, 2022). The lack of female leaders and morality regulations that burden women more severely limit the space for female political movement (Swastini et al., 2025). This shows that women's political participation in PTKI is influenced by the complex relationship between religious texts, traditions, and institutional power (Engzelli S. et al., 2025; Nurrohman et al., 2023).

However, the development of the digital ecosystem opens up new space for female students to deconstruct patriarchal domination. Social media allows female students to voice their political aspirations, build solidarity, and advocate for gender justice issues more broadly (Adnyani & Rusadi, 2023). This phenomenon shows that student political agencies are dynamic and adaptive in utilizing technology to expand political participation in the midst of limited campus physical space.

The Role of Islamic Higher Education as an Arena of Social Transformation and Political Agency

Higher education at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) acts as a secondary political socialization agent that transforms female students from passive positions to subjects with strong political agency. The educational process not only focuses on knowledge transfer, but also forms political identity through academic interaction and student organizations (Sutrisman, 2018). The integration of Islamic science and modern social sciences, as well as involvement in campus discussions and advocacy, has been proven to increase the political self-efficacy of female students (Aritonang et al., 2025). Thus, the academic climate of UINSU has the potential to be a catalyst for the birth of a women's movement based on Islamic intellectuality and morality.

This transformation is marked by the growth of critical thinking independence and the courage of female students in voicing their political aspirations, which is supported by exposure to political information, an academic environment, and gender-inclusive lecturers (Haryono & Sheridan, 2025; Nurana et al., 2025). Organizations such as DEMA and SEMA serve as political laboratories that train leadership, negotiation, and diplomacy (Setiawan & Ninawati, 2023). The success of female students in fighting for student issues shows that Islamic higher education is able to produce Muslim women with integrity and moderation (Muzakar, 2019).

In the digital era, digital literacy and political education further strengthen the rational and critical political orientation of female students (Hati & Wardi, 2024). Social media is a strategic space to build public opinion, fight for gender justice, and expand women's political participation. The integration of moderate Islamic values with digital skills makes UINSU students a new socio-political force (Suryana et al., 2022). Therefore, institutional support for the political aspirations of female students needs to be strengthened in order to realize a more just, equal, and democratic society (Nafisa et al., 2025).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research integrates the theory of *emancipatory fiqh siyasah*, the sociology of higher education, and the concept of women's political agency to analyze the role of UIN North Sumatra in shaping the political aspirations of female students. The theory of *fiqh siyasah* provides theological legitimacy that political participation is an inclusive religious mandate, as reflected in QS. At-Taubah verse 71 about equal partnership in *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (Cahyani et al., 2025). This perspective challenges patriarchal interpretations that limit women in public spaces and place political involvement as a form of devotion to God and society.

Higher education is positioned as a transformational factor that transforms female students from passive to active and reflective political agents (Haryono & Sheridan, 2025). Through curriculum, organizational climate, and leadership experience, female students gain intellectual skills and political self-efficacy to face patriarchal structures on campus (Aritonang et al., 2025). The integration of theological strengthening, academic transformation, and digital literacy also forms the political identity of female students who are moderate, critical, and adaptive to the development of the times (Hati & Wardi, 2024). Thus, when Islamic higher education provides a gender-equitable space and emancipatory theological support, female students can transform into agents of change that are important for the future of democracy (Setiawan & Ninawati, 2023).

METHOD

Types and Approaches to Research

This research uses a type of qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. This approach was chosen to delve deeply into the meaning and life experiences of UIN North Sumatra students in shaping their political aspirations. The main focus of this research is not on numbers, but on how female students interpret their interactions with academic curricula and campus organizations as part of the political maturation process. (Nurrohman et al., 2023)

Location and Research Subject

The location of the research is the State Islamic University (UIN) of North Sumatra Medan. The research subjects consisted of 10 active female students who were deliberately selected (*purposive sampling*). The criteria for selecting subjects include female students who are active in internal and external campus organizations, as well as female students who show great interest in socio-political issues through participation in classes and digital advocacy actions.

Data Collection Techniques

Data is collected through three main techniques:

1. **In-Depth Interviews:** Conducted in a semi-structured manner to obtain an authentic narrative regarding the informant's political awareness, challenges faced, and spiritual motivations.
2. **Observation:** Direct observation of the activities of female students in organizational meetings and discussion forums in the campus environment to see their political perperitvity in real terms.
3. **Documentation Study:** Collection of scientific literature, syllabus of fiqh siyasah courses, and policy documents of student organizations at UINSU to strengthen the basis of analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis follows Miles and Huberman's interactive model which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The researcher filters the information from the interviews, groups them into key themes relevant to the research objectives, and then arranges them in an in-depth descriptive narrative to answer the problem formulation.

Data Validity Test

The validity of the data is ensured through source triangulation techniques and triangulation techniques. The researcher compares the results of interviews between female students, checks them with the lecturer's views, and conducts *member checks* by reconfirming the draft of the interview results to the informant to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation of the meaning produced.

Researcher Position (Reflexivity)

The researcher acts as a key instrument that conducts direct interaction with the research subject. The researcher is aware of the influence of personal background on the interpretation of data, so that the principle of objectivity is maintained by conducting continuous self-reflection so that the narrative produced is purely the voice and aspiration of UINSU students without distortion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Changes in Political Awareness of Female Students through Education at UINSU

Politicians in a political party, especially those who occupy certain positions, need to understand three main principles. First, every political position is essentially a mandate from the community that must be maintained and implemented as well as possible. Second, every political position contains an accountability dimension to the public. Third, every political activity must be based on the principle of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), namely brotherhood among fellow human beings. (Dewi & Junaidi, 2024)

Based on research data, female students at UIN North Sumatra experienced a very dynamic transformation of political consciousness after being exposed to an academic curriculum that integrates Islamic and political values. The informant student with the initials **FZ (21 years old)** admitted that at first she considered politics as a dirty world and only worthy of being engaged in by men who have a tradition of aggressive debate. However, after taking the Fiqih Siyasah course, his perception changed fundamentally because he began to understand that politics is an instrument of worship to realize social justice. This transformation shows that the classroom at UINSU functions as an incubator that transforms the self-efficacy of female students from initially passive to a critical agent. Students are now starting to dare to voice their opinions regarding university policies and view it as a moral responsibility as a Muslim intellectual.

"Initially, I entered this study program because of the last choice, I thought politics was dirty and boring. But in the fourth semester, in the Fiqih Siyasah course, our lecturer explained the concept of deliberation in the Qur'an extensively. I just realized that Islam actually obliges us, female students too, to speak out against injustice. Now, if there is a discriminatory campus policy regarding UKT, for example, I can't be silent anymore. There is a sense of sin if I have knowledge but it is not used to advocate for friends who are oppressed. Studying at UINSU is like being given new glasses to see the world." (FZ informant interview, May 12, 2024).

Patriarchal Cultural Barriers in Student Organizations

Although the intellectual awareness of female students has increased, the implementation of such aspirations in intra-campus organizations such as DEMA and SEMA still faces a thick wall of patriarchal culture. Field findings revealed that female students are often placed in peripheral positions that are administrative, while strategic decision-making positions remain dominated by male students. The informant with the initials **RA (22 years old)** told how difficult it was for women's voices to be heard in coordination meetings dominated by intimidating masculine speaking styles. The patriarchal culture at UINSU manifests in the form of stigmatization of morality, where female students who are too vocal are often labeled as figures who lack dignity or violate the nature of womanhood. This barrier creates a double burden for female students who have to prove their intellectual capacity in the midst of strict morality supervision from their surroundings.

"Often I feel that the woman's voice is just a 'sweetener' in meetings. When I gave a suggestion about the budget or the direction of the movement, many of my friends interrupted with an intimidating style of speech. There was a moment where a friend of the management said to me, 'Come on, RA, let's just focus on documentation or consumption so that our event is neat'. That sentence seemed to degrade my intellectual capacity. They also use religious postulates, they say that the leader must be a man because he is mentally stronger. There I felt dissonant, in class equality was taught, but in the organization patriarchy was practiced raw. We have to fight twice as hard just to be heard." (RA informant interview, May 15, 2024).

Integration of Religious Values and Political Aspirations of Female Students

UIN North Sumatra students showed extraordinary ability to integrate emancipatory theology as the basis of their political movements on campus. Instead of seeing religion as an obstacle, they use contextual

reinterpretations of sacred texts to legitimize their political agency as male equal partners. The informant student with the initials SN (21 years old) emphasized that Surah At-Taubah verse 71 gives her a spiritual mandate to be active in amar ma'ruf nahi munkar in public spaces. This integration makes their political aspirations ethical and with integrity, where every advocacy action carried out is seen as a form of real worship to God. The mastery of theological literacy combined with digital skills has made UINSU students become a new intellectual political force that begins to dare to break the dominance of old discriminatory traditions.

"At first I doubted, is it true that female students are allowed to participate in actions and protests on the street? Friends in the village often say that women are their place at home. But when I learned contemporary interpretation and mublah methods on campus, my eyes were opened. The Qur'an says that men and women are 'awliya', equal partners for amar ma'ruf nahi munkar. So, if I participate in advocating for friends who are about to drop out because of the economy, it is political worship for me. Religion never tells us to be silent in the face of injustice. It is the quality of these words that makes me want to keep going, even if it is a bit of a stretch. My political aspiration is not just to want to be in power, but to ensure that the values of Islamic justice are truly upheld at UINSU." (SN informant interview, May 18, 2024).

Discussion

Changes in Political Awareness of Female Students through Education at UINSU

The analysis of the paradigm transformation of UIN North Sumatra students, as reflected in the FZ informant, shows that Islamic universities play an important role as agents of secondary political socialization. Through the *fiqh siyasah curriculum*, students experience a process of intellectual enlightenment that dismantles the "culture of silence" due to authoritarian educational experiences (Haryono & Sheridan, 2025). Sociologically, there is an identity reconstruction from an apathetic position towards a reflective and proactive political agency (Al Hamid, 2025). These findings are in line with research showing that social education on campus contributes to increasing students' awareness of law and democracy (Aritonang et al., 2025). The courage of female students to voice criticism of campus policies shows the increasing self-efficacy of women's politics in the public sphere.

This transformation is supported by the ability of female students to dialogue normative texts of Islam with the demands of contemporary justice. Inclusive learning encourages an understanding that leadership in Islam is functional and competency-based, not solely determined by gender (Febriansyah et al., 2025). Students also began to use the perspective of *maqashid al-shari'ah* to assess campus policies by placing welfare as the main orientation (Sulistiyawati & Yamani, 2025). This theological awareness provides moral legitimacy for female students to engage in politics without feeling contrary to religious teachings (Nurana et al., 2025). Thus, UINSU succeeded in bridging religious obedience with political courage as part of the caliphate's mandate.

UINSU's academic climate, which is increasingly open to gender equality issues, has also strengthened this transformation. The integration of sharia and social sciences equips female students with critical skills to identify various forms of discrimination in campus life (Sutrisman, 2018; Nafisa et al., 2025). In addition, financial support such as KIP-Lecture scholarships strengthens the motivation of female students from low-income groups to engage in social advocacy as a form of community service (Lopis, 2024). This synergy between intellectual enlightenment and institutional support creates conditions that support the birth of moderate Muslim women leaders with integrity (Setiawan & Ninawati, 2023). Overall, education at UINSU has succeeded in instilling a gender-inclusive awareness of law and democracy, so that female students are no longer just objects, but also active subjects in campus discourse and policy changes (Nurana et al., 2025; Suryana et al., 2022). Thus, the formation of the political aspirations of

female students at UINSU is a continuous transformation process towards a more just and civilized Islamic democracy (Muzakar, 2019; Za & Yunita, 2022).

Patriarchal Cultural Barriers in Student Organizations

The thick wall of patriarchal culture felt by RA informants in the dynamics of intra-campus organizations of UIN North Sumatra reflects the existence of structural inequality that is still rooted in the political recruitment mechanism of students. Sociologically, the dominance of male students in strategic decision-making positions is a form of preserving the hegemony of masculinity that marginalizes women's intellectual capacity to the administrative realm (Aula, 2023). This patriarchal culture often uses intimidating communication instruments to silence female student proposals, which creates an organizational environment that is not conducive to the growth of women's agency (Halizah & Faralita, 2023). This phenomenon shows that although universities have provided equal academic provisions, the arena of political practice on campus is still shackled by traditional gender stereotypes that reduce the role of women. The marginalization of female students in strategic positions such as the chair of DEMA or SEMA is a tangible portrait of structural barriers that require a more serious and measurable affirmation policy. (Za & Yunita, 2022)

This agency inhibition also operates through a mechanism of "body politics" in which the morality of female students is regulated and supervised more strictly than that of male students in Islamic campus settings. Negative stigmatization of vocal female students as "less pious" or "wild" creates psychological barriers that make women tend to withdraw from power contests. The cognitive dissonance experienced by female college students such as RA, where the theory of equality in the classroom is at odds with patriarchal practices in organizations, triggers tremendous emotional distress for them. However, this pressure is often a catalyst for the emergence of a spirit of collective resistance through the formation of a network of solidarity between female students to strengthen each other's agency (Pasariibu, 2021). The resistance of UINSU students manifests in their efforts to seize discussion spaces that have been dominated by men and demand a fairer and proportionate division of roles. (Swastini et al., 2025) (Engzell S. et al., 2025) (Haryono & Sheridan, 2025)

The theological foundation that is often abused to perpetuate patriarchy in organizations usually centers on the textual interpretation of the hadith on the prohibition of women leading that is understood without looking at the asbabun nuzul and the current sociopolitical context. Male fellow students often use pseudo-religious authority to delegitimize female student proposals, which systematically limits women's rights to engage in deliberation or decision-making. In fact, Islam expressly positions men and women as equal partners (Febriansyah et al., 2025) (Fikriana & Syakban, 2024) *awliya* in public affairs, as stated in Surah At-Taubah verse 71. This gap between emancipatory religious ideals and conservative organizational realities indicates the urgent need for political thought reform among student organization managers. Without this deconstruction of the patriarchal interpretation, the political aspirations of female students will continue to be trapped in the trap of subordination in the name of religion. (Cahyani et al., 2025)

In addition, institutional social control factors that limit the mobility of female students at night also have an indirect impact on the weakness of their political networks. Within UINSU, political lobbies between organizational factions often occur outside of official campus hours, where female students are hampered by curfew rules or heavier norms of decency for women (Rasyidin & Aruni, 2016). This condition causes female students to lose access to strategic information and opportunities to build strong political coalitions as male students do. These obstacles are multidimensional, including cultural, structural, and technical aspects of campus bureaucracy policies that are not yet fully gender-sensitive (Suryana et al., 2022). Therefore, the political aspirations of female students

at UINSU demand a change in the academic ecosystem that is more friendly to the mobility and security of Muslim women's participation. (Nurrohman et al., 2023)

Sociologically, female college student's navigation in this patriarchal labyrinth can be seen as part of the agency's struggle to gain recognition of law and democracy at the university level. Despite the pressure, UINSU students continue to strive to carry out political *ijtihad* by adopting the values of modernity without relinquishing their Islamic identity (Rafiq et al., 2025). Their success in winning student policy issues through digital advocacy is proof that women's agencies are able to adapt to changing times. This struggle is an investment in the creation of future Muslim women leaders who are resilient and have high moral integrity in Indonesia. This discussion concludes that breaking down the patriarchal culture in UINSU student organizations requires synergy between the courage of women's agencies and the support of gender-sensitive institutional policies. (Nurana et al., 2025) (Adnyani & Rusadi, 2023) (Setiawan & Ninawati, 2023)

Integration of Religious Values and Political Aspirations of Female Students

The success of UIN North Sumatra students, such as SN informants, in integrating emancipatory theological values as the main foundation of their political aspirations marked a significant intellectual progress within PTKIN. College students began to use the lens of *mublah* or reciprocity in understanding religious texts, which gave them spiritual legitimacy to be active in campus advocacy and political movements (Afrilia & Fauzan, 2025). This integration proves that religion is no longer seen as an instrument of inhibition, but rather as a source of driving energy for Muslim women to become sovereign subjects in democracy. Through a deep understanding of Surah At-Taubah verse 71, female students position themselves as male equal partners in the responsibility of performing (Febriansyah et al., 2025) *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* in the public space of the university. This synergy between faith and political agency creates an ethical, visionary, and grounded model of women's leadership based on the values of universal justice taught by Islam. (Cahyani et al., 2025)

This integration of religious values is manifested in the way students formulate the vision and mission of their political struggle which is always oriented towards the common good or *maslahah* (Sulistiawati & Yamani, 2025). Students like SN view that their involvement in protests or advocacy of UKT policies is a tangible form of applying the principle of deliberation commanded by the Qur'an. They reject any form of discriminatory policy by using solid sharia arguments, so that their bargaining position in front of the campus bureaucracy becomes more rational and difficult to break. This process of theological integration is a form of "intellectual jihad" that aims to restore Islam to its essence as a religion that humanizes human beings without gender discrimination (Rafiq et al., 2025). With a strong theological foundation, the political aspirations of UINSU students have high resilience to the attacks of conservative narratives that try to silence the public role of women. (Fajar & Sugirman, 2024) (Fikriana & Syakban, 2024)

In the current digital era, UINSU students also use digital literacy as a tool to disseminate this emancipatory theology to a wider audience. The use of social media as an instrument of political education allows female students to build pro-gender public opinion by presenting religious interpretations that are more progressive and easy to understand. This digital activism plays an important role in accelerating the process of transforming the political consciousness of millennial and Gen-Z female students in North Sumatra who are often exposed to disruptive information. The integration between technological proficiency and the depth of religious understanding makes UINSU students a new political force that is able to bridge the gap between tradition and progress. This shows that Islamic higher education has succeeded in transforming female students into agents of change who are intellectually

intelligent and spiritually mature. (Hati & Wardi, 2024) (Adnyani & Rusadi, 2023) (Aritonang et al., 2025) (Nurana et al., 2025)

This integration dynamic also shows a shift in student leadership orientation towards a more humanist and nationalistic approach. UINSU students who are politically aware tend to prioritize the values of religious moderation in their advocacy actions, to ensure that political movements on campus remain in the corridor of peace and national integrity. This political maturity is the result of a long dialectical process between the identities of female students as Muslim women, academics, and citizens who have the same political rights. The political aspirations of UINSU students are no longer sporadic, but have been structured in a solid framework of thought that combines the theological mandate of deliberation and the legal principles of modern democracy. With this agency with integrity, they are ready to contribute to the development of a more equitable society after graduation. (Nurana et al., 2025) (Engzelli S. et al., 2025) (Iswantir, 2019) (Al Hamid, 2025)

As a conclusion from this discussion, the integration of religious values and political aspirations is the highest achievement of higher education at UINSU in shaping the character of female students. The courage of female students to reinterpret classical Islamic political thought shows the existence of extraordinary intellectual independence in facing the challenges of the times. Gender-sensitive Islamic education has proven to be a catalyst for inclusive social transformation, where Muslim women are no longer positioned as passive objects of history. The struggle of UINSU students in integrating faith and politics is clear proof that the future of Muslim women leadership in Indonesia is very bright and based on the liberating spirit of Islam. This aspiration will continue to flow into a great stream of change that will benefit all mankind regardless of gender. (Sutrisman, 2018) (Maulana et al., 2025) (Nafisa et al., 2025) (Setiawan & Ninawati, 2023; Za & Yunita, 2022)

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that higher education at the State Islamic University (UIN) of North Sumatra plays a very vital and strategic role in transforming the political aspirations of female students through the process of internalizing moderate and progressive Islamic values. Substantively, the fiqh siyasah-based academic curriculum and the intra-campus organizational climate have succeeded in arousing the critical consciousness of female students, transforming the condition of "silence" due to traditional pressure into an active, vocal, and theological agency with a solid theological foundation. UINSU students now view political participation as a sacred mandate of deliberation and the embodiment of the responsibility of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar which is cross-gender, as mandated in Surah At-Taubah verse 71. Nonetheless, their political articulation journey still has to contend with the strong patriarchal cultural hegemony in student organizational structures, which often use instruments of morality and "body politics" to limit women's access to strategic leadership positions. However, the synergy between intellectual strengthening in college, high digital literacy, and the integration of emancipatory theology through the mubadalah method has given birth to a new generation of Muslim women leaders who have integrity, moderation, and are fully committed to social justice. Thus, Islamic higher education at UINSU has proven to be successful in becoming an arena of social transformation that facilitates female students to reclaim their political rights in order to build a more inclusive and civilized society order in the future.

Suggestion

Academic Suggestion: To future researchers and academics in the fields of sociology of education and Islamic political science, it is recommended to deepen the study of female student political participation by using a more specific intersectionality approach, considering the variables of ethnic background in North Sumatra and the influence of affiliation of religious organizations external to the campus. Further research is needed to dissect the

link between the use of artificial intelligence and the consumption patterns of digital political information of Gen-Z female students at PTKIN on the formation of their future political identity. In addition, the development of a political education model based on a "gender-sensitive curriculum" in Islamic universities needs to be pursued in order to enrich the intellectual treasures in the study of contemporary Muslim women's leadership.

Practical Advice: The leadership of the State Islamic University (UIN) of North Sumatra is advised to immediately formulate a concrete affirmation policy through the rector's regulation that guarantees a minimum of 30% female student representation in the core structure of the university's Student Executive Council (DEMA) and Student Senate (SEMA) to ensure inclusive decision-making. Lecturers and educators are expected to be more consistent in integrating gender justice perspectives and mubadalah methods in each module of religious courses in order to reduce patriarchal theological interpretations that hinder student agency. Student organizations are advised to create a more gender-friendly organizational climate by setting a safe schedule of political activities for women and providing intensive rhetorical and political lobbying training for female students. Finally, UINSU students are widely encouraged to continue to strengthen collective solidarity and digital political literacy to voice their aspirations without fear of social stigmatization that harms their gender.

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