

**POLITICAL LITERACY BASED ON NAHDLATUL ULAMA COMMUNITY CIVICS IN STRENGTHENING CIVIC VIRTUE AND DEMOCRACY***LITERASI POLITIK BERBASIS COMMUNITY CIVICS NAHDLATUL ULAMA DALAM MENGUATKAN CIVIC VIRTUE DAN DEMOKRASI***Zindan Baynal Hubi\*, Karim Suryadi, Endang Danial, Asep Mahpudz, Anwar Hidayat**

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

Jalan Dr. Setiabudhi Nomor 229 Bandung 40154, Indonesia

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E-mail: baynalzindan@upi.edu

**Abstract:** the purpose of this study is to analyze the normative basis for fostering political literacy among *Nahdliyin* citizens and *bahtsul masa'il* as a framework for political education in the Nahdlatul Ulama tradition. This study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing a case study design. The results of the study indicate that the development of political literacy among *Nahdliyin* citizens is based on classical texts, the opinions of scholars, the decisions of the Nahdlatul Ulama Mukhtamar, and the outcomes of the Musyawarah Alim Ulama. The values instilled in the process of developing political literacy among *Nahdliyin* citizens can be categorized into four key areas, namely *tasamuh*, *tawasuth*, *tawazun*, and *ta'adul*. Political literacy development within Nahdlatul Ulama is centered on the *lajnah bahtsul masa'il* as a forum that examines various social, political, and religious issues in depth from the perspective of *ahlussunnah wal jama'ah* scholarship and theology. The *lajnah bahtsul masa'il* functions as a center for law enforcement and collective decision-making among scholars, *Syuriah*, *Khatib*, *A'wan*, and *Tanfidziyah*.

**Abstrak:** tujuan kajian ini yaitu untuk menganalisis landasan normatif dalam pembinaan literasi politik warga *Nahdliyin* serta *bahtsul masa'il* sebagai kerangka pendidikan politik dalam tradisi Nahdlatul Ulama. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pembinaan literasi politik warga *Nahdliyin* didasarkan pada kitab klasik, pendapat ulama, keputusan Mukhtamar Nahdlatul Ulama, serta hasil Musyawarah Alim Ulama. Nilai yang ditanamkan dalam proses pembinaan literasi politik warga *Nahdliyin* dibedakan menjadi empat yaitu *tasamuh*, *tawasuth*, *tawazun*, dan *ta'adul*. Pembinaan literasi politik di lingkungan Nahdlatul Ulama berpusat pada *lajnah bahtsul masa'il* sebagai forum yang mengkaji berbagai persoalan sosial, politik, dan keagamaan secara mendalam dalam perspektif keilmuan dan teologi *ahlussunnah wal jama'ah*. *Lajnah bahtsul masa'il* berfungsi sebagai pusat penegakan hukum dan penetapan keputusan secara kolektif yang dilakukan oleh para ulama, *Syuriah*, *Khatib*, *A'wan*, serta *Tanfidziyah*.

**INTRODUCTION**

The strength of democracy in a democratic society depends not only on the presence of government institutions but also on citizens' active participation in social and cultural life. Political education can foster maturity, responsibility, and critical thinking among citizens. (Hubi et al.,

2021; Siegel-Stechler, 2019). Community-based civic education implemented within social and community organizations promotes democratic values, tolerance, and the capacity to engage in collective interests (Rock, 2022; Sutrisno, 2020). The strengthening of community-based civic education for the Indonesian public cannot

rely solely on the state as the primary driver. This condition underscores the importance of non-state actors as strategic partners in building sustainable political awareness at the community level.

Civil society organizations, religious organizations, non-governmental organizations, and community groups play a vital role in shaping civic knowledge, civic skills, and the character of citizens. The existence of organizations rooted in spiritual commitments and religious values becomes key to improving social welfare and enhancing civic intelligence, while also shaping private and public character (Saud, 2020; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002). Community organizations play a crucial role in maintaining a healthy public sphere, as evidenced by findings in China that demonstrate the significant support community organizations provide for community development and public participation in local governance (Hu & Zhu, 2020). Research in Bangladesh demonstrates contributions to women's empowerment in three aspects, namely raising awareness, ensuring participation, and encouraging action. Research in Korea suggests that civil society organizations facilitate mutual learning among civil society actors in peace processes (Kim, 2022). Strengthening the capacity of community-based organizations constitutes an essential prerequisite for the growth of active and participatory citizenship in democratic societies.

Civic engagement oriented toward enlightenment and empowerment is crucial because participation in social life is necessary and effective for development and the envisioned process of social reconstruction. Community-based civic education can strengthen social cohesion by encouraging cross-community participation, yet Indonesia has experienced a decline in civic awareness and social cohesion in recent years (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002; Akmaliah, 2022; Fahmi et al., 2021; Schmidt, 2021). Globalization and ideological fundamentalism have weakened philosophical and sociological awareness of citizenship and nationhood (Huda, Yusriyadi, & Thohir, 2020; Magnis-Suseno, 2006; Yani, 2022). The post-Reformasi political climate, particularly during and after the 2014 and 2019 elections, has revealed a deepening polarization as religious and identity-based affiliations have overshadowed civic rationality

and public virtue (Jati, 2022; Jubba et al., 2022; Zulfadli, 2018). This fragmentation creates an urgent need to reconstruct civic values that are inclusive, participatory, and grounded in both national and spiritual ethics (Ghebru & Lloyd, 2020; Jubba et al., 2022). This reconstruction is considered essential as a foundation for restoring civic practices oriented toward unity, public civility, and democratic sustainability.

The political literacy of Indonesian citizens has continued to decline over time, particularly within grassroots communities. Weak civic competence and political literacy are expected to undermine the quality of local democracy and trigger potential social conflict driven by political extremism, which may erupt at any time (Arifin, 2017; Grossmann & Brienza, 2018; Podschwadek, 2022). The formal school system has not fully succeeded in cultivating a democratic ethos that is contextually rooted in Indonesia's socio-religious realities. Scholarly attention needs to be directed toward alternative civic spaces, namely social citizenship cultivated through community-based institutions such as Nahdlatul Ulama, which has long served as a moral and social pillar in Indonesia's nation-building process since its establishment in 1926 (Jubba et al., 2022; Niam, 2017; Rahayuningsih et al., 2023; Schmidt, 2021). The role carried out by Nahdlatul Ulama constitutes a domain of community-based citizenship because socio-cultural organizations actively operate across multiple lines of social and communal life.

Civic education as a socio-cultural movement of citizenship, functions as a medium for citizens' self-actualization aligned with their rights, obligations, and socio-cultural contexts through informed and responsible participation. Research that specifically examines the role of organizations, particularly religion-based organizations, in fostering civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic disposition grounded in conceptual-pedagogical principles for developing reasoning based on religious value traditions within an Indonesian national framework remains limited (Almond, 2000; Branson & Quigley, 1998; Huda & Suharno, 2023; Nasiwan, 2023). Studies on civic education and political education primarily focus on formal education and non-religious organizations.

Nahdlatul Ulama's civic initiatives, ranging from *halaqahs* to social movements and literacy

programs in political education, serve as alternative spaces for maintaining a democratic culture and fostering national awareness beyond formal institutions. The contemporary relevance of this study lies at the intersection of community-based civic education, political education literacy, and community-based religious engagement. Recent studies have more frequently addressed the rise of extreme or intolerant religiosity in Indonesia and the ways two major Islamic organizations in Indonesia, namely Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, implement religious moderation as a middle path within social religious life (Fahri & Zainuri, 2022; Haris et al., 2023; Huda, Yusriyadi, & Thohir, 2020). This study is situated within community-based civic education research, offering a socio-cultural framework to understand Nahdlatul Ulama's civic engagement.

The novelty of this study lies in constructing an analytical model of community civic engagement within the Nahdlatul Ulama context, with a focus on religious traditions and spiritual values that contribute to civic competence and political literacy among the general public as a form of citizenship character. This study differs from earlier research that treats civic education primarily as a formal curriculum, as it examines the production of civic awareness through religious discourse, cultural practices, and communal interactions within the Nahdlatul Ulama social ecosystem (Burhan, 2022; Kosim et al., 2023). This study highlights Nahdlatul Ulama's distinctive approach to political literacy, rooted in *wasathiyah*, *wathaniyah*, and *ukhuwah insaniyyah*, as a potential model for strengthening Indonesian democracy.

This study offers a critical understanding of Nahdlatul Ulama, as a religious organization, mediating the relationship between religion and democracy and fostering citizens that are politically literate, ethically responsible, and socially engaged. This study is significant for elucidating Nahdlatul Ulama's role as a community civics organization that cultivates civic competence and moderate political literacy, while also providing a new framework for developing civic education grounded in religious values in Indonesia (Hariyanti, 2022; Hubi et al., 2022). Based on the preceding discussion, this study examines the normative foundations of cultivating political literacy among *Nahdliyin*

and *bahtsul masa'il* as a framework for political education within the Nahdlatul Ulama tradition.

## METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the practice of political education literacy from the perspective of Nahdlatul Ulama. Data was collected through observation, document study, and in-depth interviews with key informants from the Nahdlatul Ulama Branch Office in Bandung, including members of the *Syuriah*, *Tanfidziyah*, *Khatib Aam*, autonomous body cadres, and *Nahdliyin* residents. The research location was selected purposively because the Nahdlatul Ulama Branch Executive in Bandung City is one of the oldest and most representative branches in Indonesia, making it a relevant site for examining the role of Nahdlatul Ulama in strengthening national awareness and promoting moderate politics among *Nahdliyin* members. Data analysis was conducted interactively through data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2014; Tomaszewski, Zarestky, & Gonzalez, 2020; Creswell, 2020). The analysis process was repeated to identify the meanings and patterns that naturally emerged.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Normative Basis in Fostering Political Literacy among *Nahdliyin* Citizens Top of Form

Political literacy cultivation within the *jam'iyah* is grounded in *turats* or *kitab kuning*, which are rooted in the teachings of *ahlussunnah wal-jamaah*. The core values embedded in these texts, namely *tasamuh*, *tawasuth*, *tawazun*, and *ta'adul*, constitute the ethical, moral, and social foundations that guide *Nahdliyin* conduct in social, civic, and national life (Fadil et al., 2024; Ahmad & Muniroh, 2023). This foundation serves as the basis of the civic culture being developed, namely a system of thought, values, norms, instruments, and practices that emerge, are accepted, and are actualized within the socio-cultural context of citizenship. These practices encompass relations between citizens and the state, relations among citizens, and relations between citizens and the state with the global community, which develop dynamically and generate civic responsibility and civic participation through community civics.

The primary references used in cultivating the political literacy culture of the *jam'iyah* include classical texts addressing social, political, legal, and public moral issues, works by Kiai, decisions of Mukhtar, and outcomes of Musyawarah Alim Ulama, which serve as religious guidelines. Kiai, through a social approach, not only serve as guardians of religious values but also operate as moral references and regulators of social conduct (Ismail, 2011; Nofiaturrehman, 2014; Rahayuningsih et al., 2023). This orientation aims to preserve civilization and social stability by rejecting extreme, destructive, and intolerant actions (Huda & Suharno, 2023). Nahdlatul Ulama affirms that every decision and action must be grounded in the *manhaj ahlussunnah wal jamaah*, both in the domain of *aqidah* and in *fiqh*.

*The Kitab kuning* functions as the leading learning resource and as a scholarly identity marker of traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama. Pesantren, as institutions for the development of Islamic sciences, position *kitab kuning* not only as teaching materials but also as epistemological foundations (Yusri, 2020; Asrori & Syauqi, 2020; Idrus, 2020). Other references used in cultivating the political literacy culture of the *jam'iyah* include books reflecting Kiai's thoughts, works by Nahdlatul Ulama figures on social and political issues, and documents produced through Mukhtar and Musyawarah Alim Ulama (Kurniati, Surur, & Rasyidi, 2019). These findings indicate consistency between theory and practice, demonstrating that reference sources in the Nahdlatul Ulama context encompass both academically and religiously verified classical and contemporary materials.

The texts that serve as the primary sources for political literacy cultivation within the *jam'iyah* include *Riyadus Shalihin*, *Al-Ahkam as-Sulthaniyyah wa al-Wilayat ad-Diniyyah*, *Ahkamul Ahda*, *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, *Ta'limul Muta'allim*, *Fathul Qarib*, *Syarah Shahih Muslim*, *Sulamu Taufiq*, *Tafsir Jalalain*, *Ibanatul Ahkam*, *Majmu' Syarah Matan*, *Tasharrufur Ra'i 'Ala ar-Ra'iyah Manutun bil Mashlahah*, *Alfiyyah Ibn Malik*, and *Risalah Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah*. These texts provide a framework for interpreting contemporary socio-political issues through a moderate religious perspective (Riyadi, Priyanga, & Mustolehudin, 2021). Another reference that can be used is *Qanun*

*Asasi* by K. H. Hasyim Asy'ari, which contains key ideas, historical foundations, and basic organizational guidelines of Nahdlatul Ulama (Asy'ari, 1971). This reference is utilized across multiple levels of Nahdlatul Ulama leadership, including Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama, Pengurus Wilayah Nahdlatul Ulama, Pengurus Cabang Nahdlatul Ulama, and Pengurus Cabang Istimewa Nahdlatul Ulama.

Political literacy cultivation needs to involve Kiai as a living source of learning within society. Kiai hold a central role because their authority is frequently used as a reference in guiding the community through recognized scholarly legitimacy (Anwar, 2020; Kurniati, Surur, & Rasyidi, 2019; Rahayuningsih et al., 2023). Learning resources can be classified into two types, namely resources intentionally designed for instruction, such as textbooks and modules, and resources available in the social environment, including religious leaders, experts, and public officials (Komalasari, 2010). Reference sources for political literacy cultivation in the Nahdlatul Ulama environment can be categorized as a combination of both types.

Kiai and Nahdlatul Ulama intellectuals, through the method of *uswah*, play a crucial role in providing political and social enlightenment to the community or to the *Nahdliyin*. Kiai and Nahdlatul Ulama intellectuals possess charisma and moral authority that can influence religious orientations and political choices among *Nahdliyin* (Afandi et al., 2020; Nursanti et al., 2018). Musyawarah Nasional Alim Ulama Nahdlatul Ulama, as stipulated in Article 74 of the Anggaran Rumah Tangga Nahdlatul Ulama, constitutes the highest deliberative forum after the Mukhtar and addresses a range of social, political, and religious issues (Asmawi, 2023). This forum serves as a national-level *bahtsul masail*, producing strategic decisions concerning the nation's challenges (Anwar, 2020; Kurniati, Surur, & Rasyidi, 2019). The resulting decisions become moral and intellectual references for all levels of Nahdlatul Ulama leadership, including Pengurus Cabang Nahdlatul Ulama.

The political concept developed by Nahdlatul Ulama is grounded in the principle of Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin* with a national orientation and a clean public ethic. This spirit underscores Nahdlatul Ulama's active role in advancing the national aspiration toward

*baldatun thayyibatun wa rabbun ghafur* as articulated in the preamble of the Indonesian Constitution, while also engaging in Islamic social activities, education, religious affairs, culture, and community empowerment (Al-Ansi et al., 2023). Politics in the Nahdlatul Ulama perspective is understood as *ummatan wasatha*, namely a moderate politics that promotes social change and public virtue through the values of *afdhalun nas*, *khairul ummah*, and *ummatan wasatha*.

Nahdlatul Ulama's reference sources in cultivating the political literacy of *Nahdliyin* are not only textual and historical but also contextual and transformative. *Kitab kuning*, Mukhtamar outcomes, and Musyawarah Alim Ulama serve as epistemic and moral instruments that shape the political awareness of *Nahdliyin* in a moderate and civilized manner (Barnthaler, 2023; Kosim et al., 2023). These sources serve not only as scholarly guidance but also as mechanisms for developing a form of citizenship characterized by a religious, rational, and public-oriented mindset.

Nahdlatul Ulama functions not only as a religious organization but also as a community civics that shapes civic culture and strengthens ethical, inclusive, and constitutional political participation in accordance with civility and morality. Kiai and Nahdlatul Ulama leaders maintain social harmony and reinforce political orientations to ensure that citizens remain grounded in the principles of *tawasuth*, *tasamuh*, *tawazun*, and *ta'adul* within the civic culture of *Nahdliyin* (Podschradek, 2022). Community civics also serves as an effective platform for individual character development. Social interaction within communities enables individuals to develop mutual respect, understand rights and obligations, and strengthen democratic capacities (Batubara, 2022). Community civics plays a fundamental role in fostering high-quality communities.

Community civics is a multifaceted field that involves understanding and strengthening civic culture, engagement, virtue, and morality. Social organizations, religious organizations, and non-governmental organizations are important for community development, while education and partnerships play vital roles in developing civic knowledge and civic participation. The success of community-based civic initiatives relies on reducing barriers and fostering inclusive

and reciprocal relationships (Chen, Lin, & Chen, 2025; Tolbert, 2005). Political literacy cultivation based on *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah* values, carried out by Nahdlatul Ulama, constitutes a practical integration between religion and the state, between tradition and modernity, and between spirituality and social rationality. Political literacy in the Nahdlatul Ulama perspective is understood not as the politicization of religion, but as a process of community-based civic education rooted in Islamic and national values.

Social capital, which encompasses trust, shared norms, and social networks, plays a crucial role in fostering civic virtue and promoting community development. Social capital also reinforces mutual trust and social cohesion, ultimately creating stability and enhancing the effectiveness of community development (Chen, Lin, & Chen, 2025). Social capital functions not only as a social bond but also as a strategic resource for strengthening civic virtue and social welfare (Borup, 2017). These findings enrich scholarship on religion-politics relations in Indonesia by emphasizing the role of classical Islamic sources as an epistemic basis for the formation of civic virtue. This cultivation model can serve as a reference for other religious educational institutions in developing political literacy that is civilized, anti-radical, and oriented toward the public. The role of Nahdlatul Ulama in cultivating the political literacy of *Nahdliyin* affirms that national strength does not lie solely in political systems but also in the spiritual ethics and social morality of its citizens. Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin* is positioned as the principal spirit and *ummatan wasatha* as the practical foundation, through which Nahdlatul Ulama contributes concretely to the realization of a just and civilized community, aligned with the nation's noble aspiration toward *baldatun thayyibatun wa rabbun ghafur*.

### ***Bahtsul Masail* as a Framework for Political Education in the Nahdlatul Ulama Tradition**

The criteria for authoritative reference sources within the scholarly tradition of Nahdlatul Ulama exhibit a distinctive and stringent epistemological character. The reference sources employed within Nahdlatul Ulama are not merely products of individual intellectual work, but rather the outcomes of collective religious and intellectual processes (Zahro,

2004). These sources are obtained through two principal mechanisms, namely *istikharah*, which is understood as spiritual contemplation within the framework of faith, and *istinbat*, which is understood as legal derivation grounded in established Islamic scholarly methods. The legitimacy of a reference is not assessed solely through academic rationality, but also through the spiritual authority attached to the Kiai as guardians of Islamic authenticity.

Recognized and authoritative references must be drawn from *mu'tabarah*, works explicitly by scholars with established scholarly credibility and recognized authority among Islamic scholars. The opinions of Kiai and fatwas produced through deliberative forums serve as normative foundations, provided these do not contradict the core principles of *maqasid al-shari'ah*. The five primary objectives of *maqasid al-syari'ah*, the protection of *hifz al-din*, *hifz al-'aql*, *hifz al-mal*, *hifz al-nasl*, and *hifz al-'ird*, operate as moral and ethical parameters in religious and social decisions (Dirkareshza, Azura, & Pradana, 2020; Haddade & Amin, 2024; Sadek, 2014). The epistemology of Nahdlatul Ulama can be understood as a knowledge system that integrates scientific rationality with Sufi spirituality. This tradition produces a distinctive scholarly orientation that is *turathiyah*, *jama'iyah*, and *ijtihadiah*, while maintaining continuity between classical texts and contemporary realities.

The mechanism for determining reference sources in political literacy cultivation is centered on *lajnah bahtsul masa'il*. This institution serves as a forum for *ijtihad jama'i*, which legal reasoning and collective decision-making are conducted by the Kiai, Dewan *Syuriah*, *Khatib*, *A'wan*, and the *Tanfidziyah*. This forum examines social, political, and religious issues in depth within the scholarly framework of *fiqh* and the theology of *Ahlussunnah wal-Jama'ah*. *Lajnah bahtsul masa'il* holds a significant epistemic position because it integrates *turath* with *waqi'iyah*. The resulting decisions constitute not merely responses to contemporary problems, but also reflections of continuity within Islamic scholarly traditions. The working mechanism of *lajnah bahtsul masa'il* includes problem identification, formulation of religious and social issues, engagement with classical literature, contextual

analysis, and deliberation to produce decisions based on *masalah 'ammah*.

The *lajnah bahtsul masa'il* forum serves as an essential instrument through which Nahdlatul Ulama provides ethical and religious guidance in response to national political dynamics. Nahdlatul Ulama seeks to ensure that the political participation of *Nahdliyin* remains grounded in moral values and public civility. This mechanism also constitutes a practical expression of socio-political *tasawwuf*, as Islamic spirituality becomes the foundation for constructive social and political engagement. The decision-making process within *lajnah bahtsul masa'il* does not end at the normative-religious level. The outcomes of deliberation are disseminated to community members through *halaqah*, cadre training, da'wah forums, and digital platforms. This dissemination stage demonstrates the dual function of *lajnah bahtsul masa'il* decisions as both moral guidance and a tool of political education that builds civic literacy among *Nahdliyin*. Civic literacy encompasses three dimensions, namely civic knowledge, civic disposition, and civic skill (Cogan, 1998). Political literacy cultivation in Nahdlatul Ulama aims not only to expand political knowledge but also to instill moral awareness, social ethics, and civic responsibility. Decisions produced through *lajnah bahtsul masa'il* operate as a medium for internalizing these values into the social practices of *Nahdliyin*.

Political literacy cultivation aligns with the concept of civic virtue, which refers to moral dispositions that encourage active, ethical, and responsible participation in public life. The foundational principles of *ahlussunnah wal-jama'ah* serve as the ethical basis for the formation of civic virtue (Aleman, 2023; Branson & Quigley, 1998; Podschwadek, 2022; Winataputra, 2015). Nahdlatul Ulama positions political education as a means to cultivate citizens of character, rather than merely possessing political knowledge. The role of Kiai and leader *Tanfidziyah* in disseminating the outcomes of *bahtsul masa'il* through online media reflects a transformation toward digital civic literacy, particularly given that Nahdlatul Ulama, as an organization, maintains online applications as platforms for community enlightenment. This transformation enables *Nahdliyin* to access, discuss, and internalize

national values interactively while expanding ethics-based political participation within the digital public sphere.

The epistemic mechanism enacted through *lajnah bahtsul masa'il* functions not only theologically but also pedagogically and socio-politically. This process, within the framework of a democratic society, contributes to the formation of a religious and civilized civil society. Decisions produced by *lajnah bahtsul masa'il* serve as normative guidance that directs *Nahdliyin* to participate in the political system in rational, inclusive, and constructive ways. Nahdlatul Ulama can be categorized as a community of civic engagement, namely a religious community that not only teaches doctrines of faith but also nurtures civic responsibility and social morality (Branson & Quigley, 1998). The traditions of *ijtihad jama'i* sustain continuity between spiritual values and socio-political practice, positioning the organization as a significant pillar of religion-based civic education.

Nahdlatul Ulama's national commitment to the values of nationhood and pluralism has served as a foundational struggle since its early establishment. Monumental decisions such as Resolusi Jihad 1945, Piagam Nahdlatul Wathan, the affirmation of the relationship between Islam and Pancasila, and the rejection of a *khilafah* system provide historical evidence that Nahdlatul Ulama positions Islam as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (Burhan, 2022; Gunaji, 2009; Mustaqim, 2015). The national values championed by Nahdlatul Ulama represent not merely political rhetoric, but a theological expression rooted in the teachings of *maqasid al-syari'ah*. Religious orientations among *Nahdliyin* reflect the internalization of *tawasuth*, *tasamuh*, and *tawazun* as social capital for strengthening democracy. Nahdlatul Ulama has long been a pioneer in fostering a tolerant, multicultural society that respects differences and upholds peace (Saadah, 2020). Nahdlatul Ulama interprets nationhood through three frameworks of *ukhuwah*, namely *ukhuwah islamiyyah*, *ukhuwah wathaniyyah*, and *ukhuwah insaniyyah*. These pillars form an Indonesian framework that upholds solidarity across religions, ethnicities, and cultures. The national spirit developed by Nahdlatul Ulama is not merely secular nationalism, but rather a religious nationalism grounded in universal Islamic teachings.

Nahdlatul Ulama holds that Islam was revealed as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, a religion that brings compassion, justice, and peace for all humanity. Islam, from the perspective of Nahdlatul Ulama, is universal, enabling adaptation across differences in race, culture, and social systems. Pluralism is not understood as a threat but as a divine mercy that must be safeguarded through dialogue, openness, and cross-identity collaboration. Religion is positioned not only as dogma but also as a social ethos for building a better shared life (Kholiza et al., 2024). Nahdlatul Ulama develops a political literacy paradigm that emphasizes creative dialogue and social ethics as pathways to cohesion and cooperation among citizens.

The construction of political literacy within Nahdlatul Ulama demonstrates a synthesis between the classical Islamic scholarly tradition, Indonesian national values, and the demands of modern democracy. Nahdlatul Ulama, through the *bahtsul masa'il* mechanism, has developed a model of spirituality-based civic literacy cultivation that positions religion as an ethical foundation for building a democratic society. This model illustrates that Nahdlatul Ulama epistemology operates simultaneously across revelation and reason, text and context, and spirituality and sociality. The distinctiveness of Nahdlatul Ulama is reflected in its capacity as a religious organization to preserve the authenticity of Islamic teachings while also actualizing them within the national socio-political sphere in ways that are moderate, inclusive, and civilized.

Civically literate *Nahdliyin* demonstrating good citizenship ultimately manifests civic virtue in practice. This constitutes a moral foundation that guides action toward the common good within a community. Values such as honesty, responsibility, and active participation in public life serve as important indicators of citizens possessing integrity and being oriented toward collective interests. The implementation of internalized virtue strengthens unity and supports collective commitment. Civic virtue reflects not only individual morality but also functions as a primary driver of harmonious, participatory, and just social life.

Science based on *turath al-Islami*, supported by the collective mechanism of *bahtsul masa'il*, and guided by a national orientation based on the principles of *maqasid al-syariah*, directed at

advancing the welfare of society and preventing harm to humanity. Nahdlatul Ulama has developed a distinctive model of cultivating political literacy, rooted in religious epistemology, characterized by democratic social practices, and guided by a moderate ethical orientation. This model is relevant not only for strengthening the civic literacy of *Nahdliyin* but also for making a substantive contribution to the strengthening of substantive democracy in Indonesia, namely democracy grounded in values, morality, and public welfare.

## CONCLUSION

Political literacy education for *Nahdliyin* citizens is based on classical texts, the opinions of religious scholars, decisions made by the Nahdlatul Ulama Mukhtar, and the results of the Musyawarah Alim Ulama. The central values contained therein are *tasamuh* or tolerance, *tawasuth* or moderation, *tawazun* or balance, and *ta'adul* or fairness. Political literacy education within Nahdlatul Ulama centers on the *lajnah bahtsul masa'il*, a forum that conducts in-depth studies of various social, political, and religious issues from the perspective of *ahlussunnah wal jama'ah* scholarship and theology. This forum serves as a hub for the collective exploration of law and decision-making by scholars, including the *Syuriah*, *Khatib*, *A'wan*, and the *Tanfidziyah*. Political literacy, in the view of Nahdlatul Ulama, is not understood as the politicization of religion but rather as a process of civic education rooted in Islamic values.

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