

The Influence of Political Awareness and Political Socialization on Civic Engagement: A Comparative Study of Agrotechnology and Law Students at Universitas Darussalam Gontor

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Abstract

Purpose— Democratic citizenship is a fundamental objective of higher education, as universities are expected to develop students into active, responsible, and participatory citizens. However, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the extent to which awareness and socialization contribute to political participation, particularly within Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions. This study aimed to examine the relationships among political participation and to assess how these factors contribute to building democratic citizenship among undergraduate students at Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia.

Design/methods— This study employed a quantitative research design using a structured questionnaire administered to 100 undergraduate students from the Agrotechnology and Law programs at Universitas Darussalam Gontor. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis to examine the relationships among political awareness, political socialization, and civic engagement, while comparative analysis was conducted to identify differences between the two academic disciplines.

Findings—The findings revealed a statistically significant difference in political participation between students from the Agrotechnology and Law programs. Agrotechnology students demonstrated higher political participation than Law students. The findings suggest that strengthening political awareness and political socialization through higher education can enhance political participation and foster democratic citizenship. The study recommends integrating civic education and political literacy across academic disciplines to encourage greater political participation among university students.

Keywords—Influence, political awareness, political socialization, civic engagement, Universitas Darussalam Gontor.

Ethical Statement: It is declared that scientific and ethical principles were adhered to during the preparation of this work, and all sources used have been properly cited in the bibliography. The article has been reviewed by at least two peer reviewers, a similarity report was obtained using Turnitin, and compliance with research/publication ethics has been confirmed.

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1. Introduction

The democratic citizenship has become one of the principal objectives of higher education in the recent century. Universities are increasingly expected to prepare graduates who possess not only disciplinary knowledge and professional competence but also the civic values, political awareness, and social responsibility necessary to contribute meaningfully to democratic societies. As democratic systems continue to confront challenges such as declining political trust, political polarization, misinformation, and reduced civic participation among young people, higher education institutions have assumed a strategic role in cultivating informed, responsible, and engaged citizens. Citizenship education has consequently evolved beyond a single academic subject into an institutional commitment to fostering democratic attitudes, ethical reasoning, and active civic engagement across diverse academic disciplines (Fadhli, 2024).

Fostering active citizens and building democratic citizenship requires more than encouraging electoral participation. Contemporary scholarship argues that democratic citizenship encompasses a broad range of competencies, including political knowledge, critical thinking, civic responsibility, social participation, and the capacity to engage constructively in public affairs. These competencies enable individuals to understand democratic institutions, evaluate political information critically, respect diversity, and participate effectively in community and political life. Universities therefore function not merely as centers of knowledge production but also as democratic learning environments where students develop civic identities through both formal instruction and everyday campus experiences (Abdullah et al., 2024).

Political awareness represents one of the most fundamental dimensions of democratic citizenship. It refers to an individual's understanding of political institutions, public policies, democratic processes, and the perceived ability to influence political outcomes. Students with higher levels of political awareness are generally more capable of interpreting public issues critically, recognizing the significance of democratic participation, and responding responsibly to social and political challenges. Previous studies consistently indicate that political awareness predicts higher levels of civic

engagement because politically informed individuals tend to possess stronger democratic efficacy and greater confidence in participating in public affairs (Wahyuningroem et al., 2024). Consequently, strengthening political awareness has become a major objective of citizenship education worldwide.

Alongside political awareness, political socialization constitutes another essential mechanism through which democratic citizenship is formed. Political socialization describes the lifelong process through which individuals acquire political values, beliefs, attitudes, and patterns of participation. Family members, peers, educational institutions, religious organizations, mass media, and digital platforms collectively shape political orientations throughout an individual's development. Among these agents, universities occupy a particularly influential position because they provide structured opportunities for intellectual discussion, exposure to diverse perspectives, leadership experiences, and civic participation. Through classroom interaction, student organizations, community engagement activities, and campus governance, higher education institutions contribute substantially to students' democratic development (Candraningrum et al., 2025).

The relationship between political awareness and political socialization becomes increasingly significant in contemporary higher education. Political awareness equips students with cognitive understanding, whereas political socialization provides the social experiences through which democratic values become internalized. Together, these dimensions influence civic engagement, which reflects students' willingness and ability to participate actively in social, political, and community affairs. Civic engagement extends beyond conventional political participation such as voting or joining political parties. It includes volunteering, public deliberation, community service, advocacy, collaborative problem-solving, and other forms of constructive involvement that strengthen democratic society. Consequently, democratic citizenship should be understood as the integration of political knowledge, civic values, and participatory behavior rather than merely electoral activity.

Although universities share a common mission of promoting civic responsibility, students' civic development may differ according to their academic disciplines. Academic programs expose students to different intellectual traditions, professional

norms, and patterns of social interaction that shape their civic identities in distinct ways. Disciplines emphasizing governance, public policy, law, and social sciences often provide greater opportunities for students to discuss political institutions, democratic values, and public issues. Other disciplines may prioritize managerial, technical, or professional competencies while offering fewer opportunities for explicit political engagement. These disciplinary differences suggest that university curricula themselves function as important agents of political socialization capable of influencing democratic citizenship (Hngokchai, 2025).

Literature review

This section examines the key theoretical constructs of political participation, political awareness, and political socialization, focusing on their role in shaping civic engagement among university students. Drawing on established research, it also highlights the role of academic discipline and the Indonesian political context, particularly within Islamic higher education, to identify knowledge gaps that this study aims to address.

Political awareness, it refers to an individual's knowledge, understanding, and attentiveness toward political institutions, processes, public policies, and current political issues. It encompasses not only factual political knowledge but also the ability to critically evaluate political events and recognize the significance of civic responsibilities. According to Almond and Verba (1963), political awareness constitutes an essential element of civic culture because politically informed citizens are more likely to participate in democratic processes. Similarly, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) argued that political knowledge enhances citizens' capacity to make informed political decisions and increases the likelihood of political participation. Previous studies consistently demonstrate that politically aware university students exhibit greater engagement in electoral activities, civic organizations, and public discussions than students with lower levels of political awareness. In this study, political awareness refers to students' level of knowledge and understanding regarding political institutions, democratic principles, elections, public policies, and contemporary political issues.

It is the lifelong process through which individuals acquire political values, attitudes, norms, and patterns of political behavior. Family, educational institutions, peer groups,

religious organizations, and mass media function as major agents of political socialization (Easton & Dennis, 1969). Universities play a particularly important role by providing formal civic education and opportunities for organizational participation. Prior research indicates that students exposed to active political discussions and participatory campus environments tend to demonstrate stronger civic engagement and higher political participation. In this study, political socialization refers to students' exposure to political learning through family, university, peers, student organizations, religious activities, and digital media.

Meanwhile Political participation refers to actions by individuals aimed at influencing political decision-making and governance. These actions include voting, demonstrations, campaign involvement, civic dialogue, and even digital activism. Lipset (1983) emphasized that political participation is rooted in one's social base and is vital for sustaining democracy. Historical student movements, such as those in Indonesia during the 1998 Reformasi era, demonstrated the power of youth in driving political change (Ayub, 1991). However, as Weiss (2009) and Harahap (2020) noted in the Southeast Asian context, political participation among students is often muted due to restrictive political climates.

In Malaysia, although formal political involvement among students is regulated, studies show students remain politically aware and engage in civic matters through informal channels (Abdul Rahim, 2001). Similarly, Barton (2004) and Wilson (2008) demonstrated that institutional factors and campus culture significantly shape the extent and form of student participation in political life. In this study, political participation refers to students' involvement in electoral activities, organizational participation, civic volunteering, demonstrations, public discussions, and online political engagement.

Indonesia's post-Reformasi era has created broader democratic spaces, especially for youth. However, challenges such as political disillusionment, corruption, and elite dominance persist (Fadhli, 2024). Youth participation is often paradoxical, in that high levels of political interest coexist with low trust in formal institutions. Despite these limitations, Indonesian youth remain highly active in informal and digital spaces. Student movements alike exemplify how students express political views and mobilize support

through social media. These forms of engagement represent a shift from traditional participation to more dynamic, issue-based activism as echoing trends found in Indonesian youth (Merdeka Center, 2008). At institutions like Universitas Darussalam Gontor, where religious education shapes campus life, political engagement may be framed within moral and Islamic principles. However, no existing research has explicitly examined how differing academic programs within such an institution influence political behavior. While these studies provide valuable insights into student political engagement, knowledge gap remains that is research focusing on Islamic universities, particularly in Indonesia is still limited, with most studies concentrating on secular public institutions.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: How do political awareness and political socialization influence civic engagement in building democratic citizenship among undergraduate students at Universitas Darussalam Gontor? Specifically, the study aims to examine the relationships among political awareness, political socialization, and civic engagement, while comparing civic engagement between students enrolled in the Agrotechnology and Law Programs.

Political awareness provides the cognitive foundation for democratic engagement, while political socialization shapes political values and participatory norms. Students possessing higher political awareness are generally more capable of understanding political issues and recognizing the importance of civic responsibilities. Likewise, effective political socialization through educational institutions, family, and peer networks encourages active participation in democratic processes. Consequently, political awareness and political socialization are expected to positively influence political participation among university students.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of political awareness, political socialization, and civic engagement into a single analytical framework for examining democratic citizenship within Indonesian Islamic higher education. Unlike previous studies that focused primarily on political participation or investigated individual variables separately, this research evaluates the combined influence of political awareness and political socialization while comparing students from two distinct academic disciplines within the same institutional context. By extending citizenship

education theory to an Islamic university setting, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how higher education can strengthen democratic citizenship through both curricular and socialization processes. The findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to citizenship education scholarship and practical recommendations for universities seeking to cultivate politically aware, socially responsible, and democratically engaged graduates.

2. Methods

This study applied a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the interrelationship between political participation among university students. The survey method was selected for its effectiveness in collecting uniform data across a sizable population within a limited timeframe, and it also permitted comparative analysis between two academic disciplines: Agrotechnology and Law programs to evaluate how disciplinary orientation may influence political participation.

Population and sample

The target population of this study consisted of all final-year undergraduate students enrolled in the Agrotechnology and Law programs at Universitas Darussalam Gontor, totaling N = 100 students. Given the relatively small and accessible population, this study employed a census-based purposive sampling approach, in which all eligible students who had completed at least six semesters were invited to participate. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed, and 100 valid responses were returned, resulting in a response rate of 100%. This high response rate was achieved through in-class, supervised data collection. The final sample consisted of 56 Agrotechnology students and 44 Law students, allowing for meaningful comparative analysis between the two academic groups. The adequacy of the sample size is supported by methodological guidelines suggesting that census sampling is appropriate when the population is relatively small and accessible (Israel, 2026).

Data collection method and instrument

Data was collected exclusively through offline, paper-based questionnaires administered in-person during regularly scheduled class sessions. The instrument was developed based on prior empirical and theoretical literature on political behavior

(Galston, 2001; Gorsche, 2002; Kovacheva, 2005) and was structured into four main sections. The first section gathered demographic data, including age, gender, academic major, year of study, prior voting experience, and involvement in student organizations. The second section assessed political consciousness through a series of Likert-scale statements measuring students' awareness of political systems, interest in political affairs.

Validity and reliability

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha, yielding values of 0.81 for political consciousness, 0.78 for political socialization, and 0.84 for political participation. These values exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Hair et al., 2010).

Data collection procedure

All data collection occurred during the first semester of the 2026 academic year, strictly through in-person distribution. Surveys were handed out and completed in classrooms with the cooperation of lecturers and academic staff, ensuring high response rates and data completeness. Participants were fully briefed on the purpose of the study and assured of anonymity and voluntary participation. Ethical approval was obtained from UNIDA's institutional research ethics board, and informed consent was secured from all respondents prior to participation.

Data analysis

The collected data were processed and analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize demographic profiles and to compute mean scores and standard deviations for each of the three core variables. Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of the relationships between political consciousness, political socialization, and political participation. An independent samples t-test was used to assess whether there were statistically significant differences in political participation.

3.Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

This section presents the findings of the study based on data collected from 100 final-year undergraduate students at Universitas Darussalam Gontor. The participants came from two academic departments: Agrotechnology and Law Program. The results are organized into two primary categories that reflect the study's objectives and theoretical framework political participation and statistical relationships among these variables.

Political participation

Political participation was assessed through various forms of involvement, both institutional and non-institutional. Students were asked to report on their participation in political activities during the past two years. With regard to voting, 86 percent of all respondents reported voting in campus elections. Among them, students from Agrotechnology had a slightly higher participation rate (89 percent) compared to students from Law (83 percent). Participation in national elections was markedly lower at 11.2 percent, which can be attributed to the age distribution of respondents, many of whom may not have reached voting age during the previous national election cycle. In terms of organizational membership, 63 percent of Agrotechnology students were active in student organizations, such as student councils or political clubs, compared to 47 percent of Law students.

Volunteering in civic or religious organizations was also more common among Agrotechnology students (41 percent) than their Law counterparts (34 percent). When examining non-institutional forms of participation, such as activism and online engagement, the difference between the two departments remained notable. Twenty-eight percent of students from Agrotechnology reported having participated in peaceful demonstrations or issue-based campaigns, compared to only 15 percent of students from Law. Similarly, online political activity, such as sharing political content or participating in online debates, was reported by 55 percent of Agrotechnology students and 49 percent of Law students. These findings reveal that students from the Agrotechnology department consistently exhibit higher engagement across all forms of

political participation. Their academic background, which emphasizes field knowledge appears to foster more robust and multidimensional political participation.

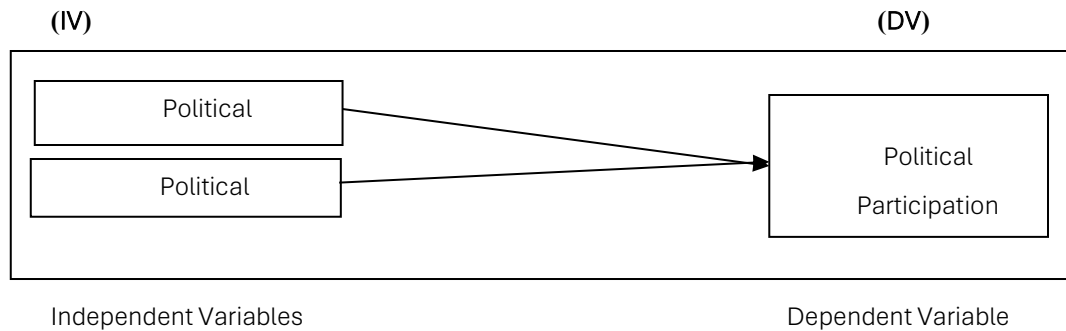


Figure 1 Determinants of Political Participation

Source: Adapted from Lipset's Voting Turnout Model (1983)

Table 2 Frequency of Voting in Local and/or State Elections and Student Associations

	Agrotechnology		Law		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
I have voted in my local and/or state elections:						
None	12	85.4	8	91.8	159	88.8
Once	11	4.9	8	5.2	9	5.0
2 times	11	4.9	8	1.0	5	2.8
3 times	11	1.2	8	2.1	3	1.7
More than 3 times	11	3.7	12	0.0	3	1.7
Total	56	100.0	44	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Level of participation (%)					Over all (%)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	N
	Very low	Low	Average	High	Very high				
How would you rate your overall political participation?									
<i>Agrotechnol</i>	5.0	12.	66.3	15.	1.3	59.0	2.9	0.7	56
<i>Law</i>	23.	27.	41.5	6.4	1.1	46.8	2.3	0.9	44
Total	14.	20.	52.9	10.	1.1	52.4	2.6	0.9	10

*Very low = 1-20%; Low = 21-40%; Average = 41-60%; High = 61-80%; Very high = 81-100%.

Table 4 T-test Analysis on Self-Rated Overall Political Participation

	M	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
I would rate my overall political participation as				
<i>Agrotechnology</i>	2.95	0.73	4.70	0.000
<i>Law</i>	2.34	0.95		

Independent samples t-Test

The independent samples t-test results presented in Table 4 indicate a statistically significant difference in political participation between the two groups, with Agrotechnology students demonstrating higher participation levels than Law students ($t = 4.70$, $p < .001$). Students from the Agrotechnology department had a higher mean participation score ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 0.73$), while students from Law had a lower mean ($M = 2.34$, $SD = 0.95$). This finding suggests that academic discipline is associated with differences in political participation. Students in the Agrotechnology program tend to demonstrate higher levels of political participation compared to those in Law. This statistically significant result reinforces the conclusion that academic discipline has a considerable effect on political behavior. The more field knowledge appears to provide students with not only greater knowledge and awareness but also greater motivation and capacity for political action.

3.2 Discussion

The Indonesia provides an especially important context for investigating democratic citizenship among university students. Since the democratic transition following the Reformasi era, Indonesian higher education has increasingly emphasized citizenship

education as part of national development and democratic consolidation. Universities are expected to cultivate graduates who possess intellectual competence alongside ethical responsibility, national commitment, and democratic values. Within this national context, Islamic universities occupy a distinctive position because they integrate academic excellence with religious and moral education. Rather than separating civic education from ethical development, Islamic higher education seeks to harmonize democratic participation with moral responsibility, social justice, and community service. This educational philosophy offers a unique environment for examining how democratic citizenship develops among university students.

Universitas Darussalam Gontor represents one of Indonesia's leading Islamic higher education institutions committed to producing graduates characterized by intellectual excellence, moral integrity, and social responsibility. Its educational system combines academic instruction with character formation through residential education, organizational participation, religious activities, and community engagement. These institutional characteristics create a rich environment for political socialization while simultaneously encouraging students to develop civic competence grounded in ethical and religious values. Nevertheless, empirical evidence remains limited regarding how political awareness and political socialization influence civic engagement within this distinctive educational context, particularly across different academic disciplines such as Agrotechnology and Law.

To understand the interrelationship among the core variables such as political consciousness, political socialization, and political participation, the Pearson correlation analysis was employed. The results revealed statistically significant and positive correlations between all pairs of variables. There was a moderate positive correlation between political consciousness and political participation ($r = 0.46$, $p < .001$), indicating that students who possessed greater political awareness were more likely to engage in political activities. A similarly moderate correlation was found between political socialization and political participation ($r = 0.44$, $p < .001$), suggesting that more frequent exposure to political content through media, peers, or academic settings tends to increase students' likelihood of political participation.

The strongest correlation emerged between political consciousness and political socialization ($r = 0.51$, $p < .001$), confirming that students who are more regularly engaged with political discussions and media are also more politically aware. These findings provide empirical support for the theoretical model presented in the literature review, which posited that political consciousness and political socialization act as antecedents to political participation. The interconnectedness of these variables illustrates a developmental pathway through which students evolve into politically active citizens.

Disciplinary Variations in Political Participation

A major finding of this research is the pronounced discrepancy in political participation between the two academic disciplines. Students majoring in Agrotechnology demonstrated substantially higher levels of engagement across nearly all modalities including voting, organizational membership, and digital activism compared to their counterparts in Law. This divergence aligns with prior literature by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) and Colby et al. (2007), which posited that these disciplines, if they centered their eagerness on governance and global politics, naturally foster political participation.

In the UNIDA Gontor Agrotechnology department, they actively reinforced political identity and efficacy. This is achieved through experiential methods such as simulations and the critical examination of contemporary political crises. These academic exercises expand students' political literacy while simultaneously cultivating the agency and confidence required for active democratic citizenship. Conversely, while Law students do engage politically predominantly within digital spheres their participation is less frequent and more homogenous. This trend likely stems from fewer curricular incentives or structural opportunities to explore civic concepts deeply. This dynamic does not imply political apathy; indeed, Law students frequently participated in campus elections and digital discourse. However, their political behaviors are notably more situational and informal, reflecting a curriculum that prioritizes direct civic action. Consequently, these insights underscore the necessity for universities to integrate holistic civic education across all academic programs, rather than confining it to political or legal sciences.

Strategic Implications for Higher Education and Policy

The empirical insights from this study offer critical pathways for academic institutions and policymakers seeking to cultivate political awareness across diverse disciplines. First, higher education institutions should develop cross-disciplinary civic education modules. Focusing on political literacy, critical analysis, ethical leadership, and social accountability, these modules should be accessible to all majors. This intervention is vital in the Indonesian context, where youth mobilization is essential for sustaining democratic consolidation. Secondly, beyond formal lecture halls, co-curricular frameworks such as debating societies, leadership seminars, and student governance offer crucial informal learning spaces. Actively recruiting students from fields with lower political exposure (e.g., science or mathematics) into these activities can effectively narrow the engagement gap. Third, acknowledging the centrality of digital media in youth politics, universities must institutionalize digital literacy. Targeted workshops and seminars addressing media ethics, algorithmic misinformation, constructive online discourse, and anti-hate speech are essential to prepare students for responsible digital citizenship.

Youth Participation within the Indonesian Political Context

Indonesia's evolving democratic landscape presents a dichotomy of opportunities and structural barriers for youth engagement. As a consolidating democracy characterized by a massive youth demographic, the nation's political trajectory depends heavily on its educated populace. Nevertheless, systemic challenges including elite entrenchment, political patronage, and party fragmentation frequently cause political cynicism among the youth (Onyewuchi et al., 2024). Despite these hurdles, recent youth-led movements demonstrate that young Indonesians possess the agency to shift political narratives through synchronized offline and online activism.

Within this framework, institutions like Universitas Darussalam Gontor occupy a distinct niche by merging academic rigor, spiritual growth, and civic responsibility. This study suggests that core Islamic tenets such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *maslahah* (public welfare), and *shura* (consultation) can be seamlessly woven into civic education. This

synthesis offers a distinct Indonesian-Islamic paradigm of participatory citizenship. By nurturing a cohort of politically literate, socially responsible, and ethically anchored graduates, faith-based universities can significantly contribute to a democratic culture that harmonizes national identity with spiritual values.

4. Concluding Remarks

The findings confirm that political awareness are important contributors to students' political participation. Students who possessed a clearer understanding of political structures demonstrated belief in their civic responsibility, and were regularly exposed to political content through media, peers, and academic discussion were more inclined to take part in various forms of political activity. These forms ranged from voting and organizational involvement to advocacy and online expression. The study also revealed that differences in academic orientation influenced the degree to which students internalized political values and participated in civic life. Such findings demonstrate that educational environments do not merely transmit knowledge but also play a pivotal role in shaping political identities and behavior. This study contributes to a broader understanding of political development among university students by emphasizing the interplay between structural exposure and individual participation.

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