
Money Politics In Madiun City During Local Elections Poses A Threat To Local Democracy

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Abstract

The phenomenon of money politics often occurs in local elections in any city, including in Madiun City, posing a serious threat to local democracy. Through local elections, the community hopes to elect leaders who are qualified and in line with the will the people. However, in practice, various forms of fraud, dishonesty, and deception are often encountered during a campaign, including the practice of bribing the public with money or goods to vote for a particular candidate, a practice known as political corruption. This study focuses on the city of Madiun, serving as the primary subject and object of analysis to examine and analyze the occurrence of political corruption in local elections. The objective of this study is to analyze the occurrence of money politics in the local election of Madiun City and to examine the factors that drive this phenomenon in Madiun City. The method used in this study is a quantitative approach focused on data collection and analysis. This approach is also used to understand the extent of the influence of money politics on society and its impact on local democracy. The method involved conducting a survey using a questionnaire designed to collect data from a large number of respondents using sampling techniques from the voter population in Madiun City, and analyzing the collected data. The results of this study indicate that money politics practices pose a serious threat to local democracy in Madiun City

Keyword: Money Politics, Local Election, Madiun City, Local Democracy, Elections

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INTRODUCTION

Regional elections are elections for regional heads held every five years and regulated by Law No.6 of 2020 concerning the election of governors, regents, mayors, and their deputies. It is important to note that these elections are managed by the General Elections Commission (KPU) and directly supervised by the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu). In accordance with the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Chapter I, Article 1, paragraphs 1 to 3, the elections are conducted in accordance with the principles of Pancasila.

Giving or promising to bribe someone so that they cannot exercise their right to vote or exercise their rights in a certain way during a general election, resulting in invalid votes, is known as money politics. Law No. 10 of 2016 regulates the use of political money for election sanctions. Whether in general elections, regional elections, or local elections, money politics is a major issue. This practice always influences the buying and selling of votes. It is not surprising that violations have been found and reported during campaigns, voting, and vote counting.

For years, money politics in regional elections, or pilkada, has been a persistent problem in Madiun City. This practice undermines democracy and the principles of fair and honest elections. Pilkada is an important tool in local democracy for selecting leaders who can represent the interests of the people. However, politics influenced by money complicates the democratic process and affects the quality of the leaders elected. Money politics not only tarnishes the image of democracy but also greatly harms society by producing leaders who prioritize the interest of specific groups over the common good.

The fact that many voters still accept money and other forms of compensation for their support of certain candidates demonstrates the phenomenon of money politics in the Madiun City elections. This clearly shows that voters prioritize. In addition, regional candidates can use money politics as a quick way to gain votes without having a clear vision or program. During the local elections in Madiun City, politics often involves the direct distribution of money, basic necessities, and other needs. Social assistance and promises attract the public to vote for a particular candidate.

However, many challenges and obstacles continue to arise in the process of local democratization in Indonesia. The phenomenon of money politics, also known as political corruption, is one of the greatest threats to the integrity of the democratic process. Not only does this practice undermine the basic principles of democracy, but it also threatens the existence of good and honest leaders.

The Phenomenon of Money Politics in the Context of Indonesian Democracy

According to research, money politics has strong roots in Indonesia's social, economic, and cultural structures. The Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) found hundreds of cases of alleged money politics violations during the 2019 elections. In fact, most people admit to having received money or goods from candidates as a form of persuasion to vote for them, according to surveys conducted by various institutions such as LIPI and Perludem.

From the social and cultural perspective of Indonesians, this phenomenon is increasingly complex. Money politics is often seen as a form of “modern mutual assistance” or “reciprocity” from prospective leaders to the people in a social context that is still bound by patronage values and traditional ties. In their research Riwanto (2021) show that the factors contributing to money politics continue to be influenced by cultural elements, poverty, low levels of education, and low levels of political understanding among the public. (Riwanto et al., 2021).

Easy access to the Internet and social media enabled the Z generation to get information quickly and easily, raising their awareness and interest to participate. Generation Z feels comfortable using technology to communicate and participate. They are often involved in online activism, social media campaigns, and digital petitions to voice their voices and encourage change (Ahdarrijal & Rahmawati, 2024).

The Complexity Of Money Politics In the 2024 Elections

In the run up to and during the 2024 simultaneous elections, money politics became increasingly complex and organized. Reports of indications of money politics in the 2024 regional elections continued to emerge in various regions, showing that practice had developed into a systematic electoral strategy (Kompas 2024). In its decision regarding disputes over the result of the 2024 regional election, the constitutional court found that significant administrative violations, political, money violations, and structured, systematic, and massive (SSM) violations were the most common.

Recent studies show that money politics in the 2024 elections has evolved into a “prokbarrel” practice that includes program agreements, social assistance, and cash handouts (Journal KPU, 2024). This indicates that money politics strategies are becoming increasingly difficult to identify and address legally. (Enforcement, 2024)

Systemic Impact on the Quality of Democracy

The quality of governance and stability of democracy in Indonesia are greatly influenced by money politics. If a regional head candidate wins through a money-focused political strategy, that victory will lose legitimacy because it is based on short-term transactional relationships rather than social commitment or public trust. As a result, newly elected leaders are more likely to try to recoup their “political capital” in ways that may harm the public's interest.

Money politics has long-term consequences, including a loss of public trust in the government, increased social inequality, and greater dependence of the politicians. This creates a cycle of pseudo-democracy that renews itself in every election cycle where public participation becomes more pragmatic and passive, shifting voters' attention from being subject to objects of politics.

METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method to measure the extent of the impact of money politics in the Madiun City regional elections on local democracy. This approach was chosen because it provides an objective picture through data linking money, politics, and voter participation rates, and can provide data from a certain broad sample. The theory used by the researcher is Max Weber's social action theory. Social action theory is a critical theory in sociology where society is built through interactions and the meanings people form.

This theory examines how individuals' motives and meanings arise when they decide to engage in certain behaviors. The social action theory used in this research focuses on how individuals act based on their subjective perceptions and what they contribute to a particular action in a specific context. This theory can be used to understand the motives and behavior of political actors in money politics, as well as how money politics can influence or threaten local democracy.

Social action theory is divided into four types, as follows:

1. Instrumental Rational Action: where actors seek the most efficient way to achieve their goals. For example, using money politics as a means to buy votes because it is seen as the easiest and most efficient way to win.
2. Rational Value Action: actions taken to achieve goals considered important for their own sake. For example: rejecting money politics by adhering to the principle of clean democracy.
3. Traditional Action: routine or habitual actions performed without thinking. For example: voters accepting bribes from candidates because it has become a habit during elections and they think it happened before and is still the same now.
4. Affective Action: actions that express emotions. Max Weber saw this as important in religious and political movements with charismatic leaders who attract followers based on emotional appeal. For example: voters choose based on a sense of gratitude rather than evaluating the candidate's platform.

Data Collection Methods: Data collection is conducted through the completion of numerical or measurable questionnaires, such as surveys, experiments, and structured observations, which are then analyzed statistically.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Money politics is part of the electoral corruption scandal and an important issue among other electoral offenses. By common definition, money politics may only be associated with vote buying. But money politics in the sense of the influence of money in elections is not just the practice of buying votes, but all practices in every stage of the election that can be

influenced by money so that one political party or candidate is favored and/or another political party or candidate is disadvantaged.

There are many processes that can be influenced by money in the election and cause the advantage of one election participant over another, for example, the verification process of presidential and vice presidential candidates, the verification process of political parties by the KPU and KPUD, the process of calculating election results and the process of recapitulating election result data. In addition, the process of placing someone in a particular nomination is also very vulnerable to the influence of money. So that the nomination of legislative candidates is very likely to be determined by money games.

Experience from elections held in Indonesia, the mode of money politics is divided into direct and indirect categories. For example, (a) distributing money directly, (b) instructions to attach flags in exchange for money, (c) distribution of basic necessities, (d) giving money to the campaign masses, (e) distributing money through cadre meetings, (f) promises to give something, (g) providing financial assistance for the construction of houses of worship, and various other modes. Actually, money politics in organizing elections has a broader scope. It is not only seen from the relationship between political parties or candidates and voters, but also must be seen in the forms of interaction between political parties or candidates, election organizers (KPU and election supervisors), and voters. Then, also does not occur at the campaign and voting stages only, but can also occur at other stages

Basic Concepts of Money Politics in the Context of Local Democracy.

Money politics, also known as vote buying, has become an important component of the political process in Indonesia, especially in the context of local elections. Academics define money politics as the provision of material goods to voters with the aim of influencing their political decisions. This phenomenon is not limited to the distribution of cash; it also includes various forms of gifts, such as basic necessities, social assistance, and other material promises.

The practice of money politics in the city of Madiun has distinct characteristics, but it also reflects the general patterns observed in various regions across Indonesia. The uniqueness of Madiun lies in how socio-economic, geographical, and demographic variables interact with local political changes. The city of Madiun is an interesting laboratory for understanding how money politics works in the context of local democracy because it is a medium-sized city in East Java with a moderate level of social heterogeneity.

The political money strategies of Madiun City must be understood within the broader context of Indonesian political history. Since the reform era, Indonesia's democratization has expanded political participation but has also created an environment that enables actions that can undermine democracy itself. One example of the paradox of democratization is political money, where greater political freedom can be used for anti-democratic actions.

1. Instrumental Rational Action in Money Politics

Max Weber's theory of social action provides a deep analytical foundation for understanding how and why money politics emerges. Political actors in Madiun City demonstrate highly pragmatic calculations in using money politics as a winning strategy in the context of instrumental rational action. The results indicate that 65% of those who participated in the study are aware that local government candidates can use money politics as an effective means of securing votes. These figures suggest that the public places significant emphasis on logical calculations in the practice of money politics. The distribution of cash or food parcels is viewed as a political investment that yields predictable and measurable returns for successful teams and candidates.

This rational calculation is based on a number of strategic considerations. First and foremost is time efficiency. Building trust and loyalty through substantive programs takes a long time and does not always yield the desired results in a relatively short campaign period. On the other hand, providing materials directly to voters can produce faster and more measurable results. Second, cost-benefit considerations. Investing in long-term programs—which may not necessarily deliver the expected electoral results—is considered an expensive strategy, even though it requires a large financial investment. This is especially true for voters who are not particularly loyal to politics and prefer to switch sides. Third, more precise targeting elements.

2. Rational Value Action: Resistance to Money Politics

Despite being a minority, 23 percent of respondents expressed their objection to money politics based on the principles of clean democracy. In the election process, this group showed a strong commitment to the principles of integrity, transparency, and accountability.

This resistance is both active and passive. Not only does this group refuse to accept political gratification, but they also socialize and inform those around them about the dangers of money politics to democracy. They vote based on the candidates' track records, visions, and missions, and demonstrate a relatively high level of political literacy.

Factors Driving Money Politics In Madiun City

1. Economic Factors: Poverty and Vulnerability

Vulnerability to money politics is greatly influenced by the economic conditions of the community. Compared to the upper-middle class, research shows that 58% of respondents with incomes below the minimum wage are more vulnerable to money politics. The presence of material promises, for instance, has been shown to influence voters who are elderly, live in rural areas, and have low education (Fauzi, 2019).

Money politics can thrive due to the structural poverty that still exists in parts of Madiun City. Economic rational choices often override long-term political considerations when people

are faced with the choice between receiving concrete assistance to meet their daily needs or upholding abstract democratic principles. Unstable income levels and vulnerability to economic shocks are caused by Madiun City's economy, which is dominated by informal sectors such as small-scale trade, agriculture, and simple services. In such situations, material assistance provided by political candidates can function as a social safety net, offering direct help during difficult economic times.

Additionally, limited access to formal financial services makes the community dependent on informal networks to meet its financial needs. In such situations, political candidates and their teams can act as providers of informal economic assistance, creating a relationship of dependency that can be used for political purposes.

2. Political Education Factors: Literacy and Democratic Awareness

The results of the study show that only 31% of respondents understand the concept of democracy and how money politics affects the quality of government in the long term. The main factor contributing to the prevalence of money politics is low political literacy. There are many ways in which this low level of political literacy is evident. First, there is a lack of understanding of how and what local governments do to provide public services. Many people are unaware that public services such as infrastructure, education, and health care are their rights as citizens, not gifts or acts of generosity from the government.

Second, people do not know how the democratic system works in terms of accountability. Political leaders are usually seen as patrons who offer assistance, rather than as public servants who must be accountable to the people for their performance. This mindset leads to misconceptions about the relationship between citizens and leaders.

Third, there is a lack of ability to obtain high-quality political information. The majority of people still rely on incomplete and biased sources of information, such as gossip, social media, and word-of-mouth. If they do not have access to accurate and unbiased information, it is difficult for them to make wise judgments about the candidates and programs available.

3. Law Enforcement Factors: Impunity and Weak Deterrent Effect

Weak law enforcement against election violations has allowed money politics to flourish. Despite numerous investigations by the Madiun City Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), law enforcement remains very weak. Out of the 12 reports received by Bawaslu, only 8 were processed, 2 were decided, and 1 was sanctioned. These figures show a significant gap between the practice of money politics in the field and the ability of law enforcement agencies to detect, process, and punish violators.

Several structural factors have contributed to the failure of law enforcement. First, the resources and capacity of election supervisors are limited. Second, the infrastructure, human resources, and budget needed to effectively monitor money politics are not available to Bawaslu and other relevant institutions. Money politics is usually conducted covertly and uses

complex networks. To prove that there is a correlation between the giving of material gifts and changes in political decisions, strong and comprehensive evidence is needed, which is often difficult to obtain.

Third, many people do not cooperate in reporting money politics. They refuse to do so for various reasons, such as fear of intimidation, distrust of law enforcement institutions, or the belief that such practices are normal and do not need to be reported.

The results of the study indicate the presence of vote-buying in the local elections in the city of Madiun. This indicates the presence of vote-buying. The Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) of Madiun City continues to investigate allegations of vote-buying that occurred during the open campaign of one of the candidate pairs (paslon) in the Madiun City local elections. To date, Bawaslu has summoned several parties involved, including individual P, who is suspected of being involved in the distribution of money. However, the individual identified as Phas failed to comply with the Bawaslu's summons on two occasions. The Bawaslu is investigating the allegations of vote-buying but has not proceeded further due to insufficient evidence. Several members of the public who completed a questionnaire acknowledged that vote buying in the 2024 local elections was carried out by certain campaign teams supporting the mayor and vice mayor candidates. The following data is also available the data:

POLITICAL PARTY	NUMBER OF VALID VOTES	FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (RP)
PERINDO	15.495	131.707.500
GOLKAR	14.893	126.590.500
PKB	14.082	119.697.000
PDIP	13.253	112.650.500
DEMOKRAT	12.570	106.845.000
PSI	12.350	104.975.000
PKS	11.422	97.087.000
GERINDRA	10.449	88.816.500
NASDEM	7.081	60.188.500

Source: Ponorogo News

This financial assistance is provided to support the operations of political parties and is based on the number of valid votes obtained in the 2024 elections. Each valid vote is valued at Rp8,500.

CONCLUSION

In the 2024 Madiun City Regional Election, money politics has become a major threat to local democracy. This study shows that this practice is indeed taking place, with candidate support teams distributing cash, basic necessities, and social assistance. Although the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) has the time to address alleged cases of money politics, no evidence is required.

The vulnerable economic conditions of the community, lack of political awareness, and a weak legal enforcement system are the main factors driving money politics. This practice is highly dangerous as it undermines the democratic process, which should be honest and fair, resulting in leaders who prioritize the interests of specific groups over the common good, and leading to an elite democracy where popular sovereignty can be bought with money.

A paradox exists in Madiun City, where voter participation has increased rapidly from 71% in 2018 to 77% in 2024. This shows that voter participation does not always correlate with the quality of democracy. To maintain local democracy in Madiun City, this situation needs to be addressed comprehensively by increasing public awareness, improving the monitoring system, and strengthening law enforcement.

About the Author

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