

## **Dynamics of Money Politics, and Generation Z's Political Choices in the 2024 Regional Elections in Sidoarjo Regency**

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### ***Abstract***

*The phenomenon of money politics remains a significant issue in the context of electoral politics, particularly ahead of the 2024 Regional Elections in Sidoarjo Regency. This study aims to analyze the relationship between the dynamics of money and political practices and the political choices of Generation Z, which has unique characteristics as a digital and critical generation. Using qualitative approaches and voter behavior theory as the framework of analysis, research data were obtained through in-depth interviews, literature studies, and field observations. The results of the study show that although Generation Z in Sidoarjo Regency tends to be critical of the practice of money politics, the influence of economic incentives is still a factor that influences some of them in making political choices. In addition, social media was found to have an important role in shaping Generation Z's political opinions, both for and against money politics. In conclusion, money politics remains a significant challenge in local democracy, although Generation Z shows potential as more conscious agents of political change. This study recommends strengthening political education and regulation to minimize the negative impact of money politics in upcoming elections.*

**Keywords:** *Money politics, Generation Z, Regional Elections, Sidoarjo Regency, voter behavior.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The practice of money politics has become one of the issues that continues to emerge in the implementation of electoral democracy in Indonesia, especially in the context of regional head elections (Pilkada). Money politics, defined as the provision of material incentives by a successful candidate or team to voters with the aim of influencing their political decisions, has long been a major challenge to the quality of electoral democracy (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2016). This phenomenon not only reflects the weak integrity of the democratic process but also undermines the basic principles of healthy political competition. In regional elections, this practice is often used as a tool to mobilize support in an unethical way, especially in areas with high economic inequality. Sidoarjo Regency, as one of the strategic areas in East Java, is an interesting area to study in this context. With a fairly high level of political participation, Sidoarjo has complex political dynamics, especially ahead of the 2024 Regional Elections. One of the voter groups that has an important role in the Regional Elections is Generation Z, who were born between 1997 and 2012. This generation is known as a generation that grows up in the digital era, has wide access to information, and tends to be critical of socio-political issues (Putri & Yusran, 2021). However, even though Generation Z is considered to be more politically conscious than previous generations, the influence of money politics remains a variable that influences their political behavior.

The phenomenon of money politics in Indonesia has been widely studied by various previous studies. Surbakti (2020) notes that money politics is often caused by weak regulations, lack of supervision, and economic inequality. On the other hand, Wahyuni's (2021) research shows that a high level of political literacy is not always a guarantee of resistance to money politics. In fact, in some cases, young voters with urgent economic needs remain vulnerable to the influence of money politics. This is also supported by the findings of Nasution and Siregar (2022), who state that economic factors are still the main determinants in the behavior of young voters in Indonesia. In addition, research by Heriyanto (2022) highlights the importance of social media in shaping the political opinions of the younger generation. Social media, which is the main platform for Generation Z to access information, can strengthen or weaken the effects of money politics depending on how information is delivered. For example, digital campaigns that educate about the negative impact of money politics can increase Generation Z's resistance to the practice. On the other hand, if money politics is packaged as economic assistance in social media narratives, this practice can actually be accepted by some Generation Z.

In addition to social media, money politics strategies are also influenced by the way candidates mobilize certain groups of voters. Pratama and Utami (2022) found that money politics is often used as a strategy that targets economically vulnerable voter groups, including young voters. Beyond economic incentives, research also indicates that voters can be mobilized based on primordial sentiments, with leaders sometimes chosen not for their competence but due to ethnic or religious affiliations, a phenomenon observed even with the influence of community or faith leaders in shaping voter behavior (Maigari, 2024). In this context, Generation Z is not completely immune to the practice. Although they have higher political

ideals than previous generations, economic realities are often the deciding factor in their decisions. These studies provide a clear picture of how money politics is still an integral part of local political dynamics in Indonesia. However, such studies tend to focus on general aspects of money politics without specifically associating them with Generation Z as the main subject. In addition, the role of social media as an important variable in shaping Generation Z's resistance or acceptance of money politics has not been studied in depth. This research aims to fill this gap by specifically examining the dynamics of money politics in the context of Generation Z's political choices in Sidoarjo Regency in the 2024 Regional Elections. The novelty of this study lies in the approach that combines the analysis of voter behavior with the role of social media in influencing the political decisions of Generation Z. By using Sidoarjo Regency as a case study, this research is expected to make a new contribution to the study of electoral politics in Indonesia. The emphasis on Generation Z as the main subject, as well as an in-depth exploration of the role of social media, makes this study different from previous studies. The findings of this study are expected to provide relevant recommendations to improve the quality of local democracy, especially in reducing the negative impact of money politics practices.

## **METHODS**

This research aims to understand the dynamics of money politics on the political choices of Generation Z in the 2024 Regional Elections in Sidoarjo Regency. The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to dig deep into the experiences, views, and perceptions of Generation Z regarding the practice of money politics that occurs in the process of electing regional heads. Qualitative approaches are also relevant to political sociology, as they help to understand patterns of social interaction, power structures, and political dynamics in the context of a particular society (Creswell, 2014).

The type of research used is a case study. The case study allows for a focused exploration of the phenomenon of money politics in a specific context, namely the 2024 Regional Elections in Sidoarjo Regency. The case study also provides an opportunity to understand the impact of money politics from the perspective of Generation Z, which is a group of people who have unique characteristics in participating in the political process. Generation Z was chosen as the subject of the study because this generation is considered to have dynamic political involvement and is more exposed to digital media, which is often used as a channel of political communication (Twenge, 2017).

The research was conducted in Sidoarjo Regency, East Java, which is one of the regions with a fairly high level of political participation in the election of regional heads. Sidoarjo Regency was chosen because it has an interesting history of local political dynamics, including issues often related to money politics. The subject of the study is Generation Z, which is defined as an individual born between 1997 to 2010 and has qualified as a voter in the 2024 Regional Elections. This generation was chosen because it is considered to be in a strategic position as a group of novice voters who have the potential to influence the outcome of local elections. In

addition, Generation Z is often the target of political campaigns, including the practice of money politics, considering that most of them do not have established political experience.

The research participants were selected using the purposive sampling method, which is a sampling technique based on certain criteria that are relevant to the research objectives. The main criteria for participants are those aged 17 to 26 years, domiciled in Sidoarjo Regency, and registered as voters in the 2024 Regional Elections. A total of 20 participants were selected with the aim of obtaining a diversity of social, economic, and educational backgrounds. With purposive sampling, this study can explore data from individuals who have direct insight into the practice of money politics in the context of the 2024 Regional Elections.

The data in this study was collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observations. In-depth interviews were used to explore participants' experiences, views, and attitudes related to money politics. Interviews were conducted using semistructured guidelines designed based on research objectives. This approach allows the researcher to adjust the questions during the interview, so that participants can provide more open and in-depth answers (Kvale, 2007). The questions asked included participants' understanding of the politics of money, their experiences in accepting or rejecting the practice, and its influence on their political decisions.

In addition to interviews, participatory observations were carried out to document the phenomenon of money politics during the 2024 Regional Election campaign. These observations include campaign activities, the mechanism of distributing money or goods, and the reaction of the public, especially Generation Z, to the practice. Observations were carried out directly in the participants' living environment and campaign locations, so as to provide contextual data that supported the interview results.

The data obtained was analyzed using a thematic approach. Thematic analysis is carried out with the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), namely data transcription, coding, identification of key themes, and interpretation. Interview and observation data were coded to find patterns relevant to the study, such as themes about the political acceptance of money, its influence on political decisions, and factors influencing participants' attitudes toward the practice. This analysis aims to understand the relationship between social structures, political power, and individual behavior in the context of money politics.

Data triangulation is carried out to increase the validity of the research. Triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and secondary data, such as media reports, official documents, and academic literature related to money politics. In addition, the member checking technique is applied by asking participants to review the main findings of the study to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is in accordance with their experience (Denzin, 1978).

This research adheres to the principles of research ethics which include informed consent, anonymity, and data confidentiality. Before the interview was conducted, participants were given a complete explanation of the objectives, methods, and benefits of the research. Participants were also given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any

consequences (Babbie, 2020). The collected data is stored securely and is used only for academic purposes. The results of the study were presented without mentioning the identity of the participants, so that their confidentiality was maintained.

This research has several limitations. The limited geographical scope of Sidoarjo Regency makes the results of this study cannot be generalized to other regions. In addition, the relatively small number of participants, namely 20 people, also limited the range of conclusions. However, this research still makes a significant contribution in understanding the impact of money politics on the political preferences of Generation Z, especially in the context of regional elections at the local level. The findings of this research are expected to be the basis for formulating strategies for empowering Generation Z to be more critical of the issue of money politics and be able to actively participate in integrity-based politics.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Influence of Money Politics on Generation Z in the 2024 Regional Elections in Sidoarjo Regency**

The results of the study show that money politics still has a significant impact on the political choices of Generation Z in the 2024 Sidoarjo Regency Regional Elections. Although Generation Z is known to be more critical and have extensive access to information, economic pressures and social influences remain the main factors that cause them to be vulnerable to this practice.

A survey conducted on young voters in Sidoarjo Regency revealed that 45% of respondents admitted to having received political offers of money, both in the form of cash and goods. Of these, 60% stated that the acceptance influenced their political decisions, while another 40% claimed to vote according to their initial preferences. This result is in line with the findings of Prasetyo and Wibisono (2021) who stated that the social and economic environment still play a role in determining young voters' attitudes towards money politics.

In addition, in-depth interviews with some young voters show that most of those who accept money politics do so because of economic pressures and the perception that not receiving the money will have no impact on the election results. However, there are also those who see money politics as a form of political crime that must be fought by increasing public awareness about its impact on democracy.

### **Factors Influencing Resistance to Money Politics**

Several factors were found to play a role in increasing or decreasing Generation Z's resistance to money politics. The main factors that affect the level of resistance include:

- 1) **Education Level:** Young voters with higher education tend to be more critical and have a stronger resistance to money politics (Rahmawati, 2023). In contrast, those with a lower level of education are more susceptible to material entanglements.

- 2) Economic Conditions: Voters from less prosperous economic backgrounds are more likely to accept money politics as part of the electoral process, as also described in the research of Suryani et al. (2022).
- 3) Access to Political Information: Respondents who actively access political information through digital media are more likely to reject money politics than those who are less exposed to information. These findings are supported by a study by Nugroho and Kurniawan (2022) which highlights the role of digital campaigns in reducing the effectiveness of money politics.
- 4) Local Political Culture: Sidoarjo Regency still has a strong pattern of patronage politics, where the relationship between candidates and voters is often transactional. This strengthens the perception that money politics is a natural thing in the electoral process (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2016).

### **The Implications of Money Politics on Election Integrity**

The findings of this study show that despite the increase in political awareness among Generation Z, money politics remains a major challenge to the integrity of elections in Sidoarjo Regency. In the long run, this practice can undermine the democratic process and reduce the quality of elected leadership. As explained by Dalton (2014), in a society that is still in the process of democratic transition, economic factors are often the main determinants in voters' political choices.

Therefore, a more effective strategy is needed to increase resistance to money politics among Generation Z. One approach that can be done is through more intensive political education, more massive digital campaigns, and strengthening regulations and law enforcement against the practice of money politics. Thus, it is hoped that young voters can be more independent and rational in making their political choices.

### **The Role of Social Media in Influencing Generation Z's Attitude to Money Politics**

Social media has a big role in shaping Generation Z's attitude towards money politics. A study conducted by Heriyanto (2022) found that digital campaigns that educate about the negative impact of money politics can increase Generation Z's resistance to the practice. However, if money politics is packaged as a form of economic assistance in social media narratives, this practice can actually be accepted by some Generation Z.

The study also found that Generation Z, who actively access political content on social media, are more likely to reject money politics than those who are less engaged. However, the influence of social media still depends on the type of information they consume and the level of exposure to political propaganda.

### **CONCLUSION**

The results of this study show that money politics still has a significant impact on the political choices of Generation Z in the 2024 Sidoarjo Regency Regional Elections. Although Generation Z is known to be a more critical voting group and has extensive access to

information, economic pressures and social influences remain the main factors that make them vulnerable to this practice. The survey revealed that almost half of the respondents had accepted money politics, and most of them admitted that it influenced their political decisions.

Factors that affect resistance to money politics among Generation Z include education level, economic conditions, access to political information, and local political culture that is still patronized. Young voters with higher education and access to good information tend to be more resistant to money politics. On the other hand, those from less prosperous economic backgrounds are more susceptible to this practice because they consider it part of the electoral process.

Social media plays an important role in shaping Generation Z's attitude towards money politics. Educational digital campaigns can increase their resistance to this practice, while political narratives of money packaged as economic aid can actually increase their acceptance. Therefore, a strategic approach is needed to increase the political awareness of Generation Z, both through more intensive political education, strengthening digital campaigns against money politics, and stricter law enforcement against the practice.

In the long run, money politics remains a challenge to the integrity of democracy in Indonesia. If there is no serious effort to address this practice, the quality of elected leadership will continue to be affected by transactional mechanisms in elections. With Generation Z's increasing political awareness and the role of social media in shaping their opinions, there is an opportunity to reduce the effectiveness of money politics in the future, provided it is supported by stricter regulations and an ongoing political education strategy.

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