

Social Construction of Sedarum Village Community on Money Politics in Village Head Elections

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Abstract

This research aims to understand the social construction of the Sedarum Village community towards money politics in the village head election, how the community interprets and responds to money politics, because this money politics has been considered commonplace by the community, which leads to transactional vote buying. The phenomenon of money politics may be familiar to us, including the people of Sedarum Village. At the time of the village head election, there were two candidates for the position of village head, and both candidates gave money to the community to vote. Because in Sedarum village, it has become a tradition that every time there is an election, there must be money received, even worse, most Sedarum people receive money from the two candidates. Phenomenological theory is used to analyze the meaning of money politics from the community's point of view, and political economy theory that explains the economic motivation behind the acceptance of money politics. The results show that money politics has become a tradition that is difficult to avoid, where most people tend to accept money in exchange for voting, even people who have close connections with candidates can get more money than ordinary people. Money politics not only affects election results, but also changes the social and political structure of the village, where the financial capability of prospective village leaders is more important than the quality of leadership.

Keywords: Money politics, Social construction, Village Head election, Sedarum village, Local democracy.

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INTRODUCTION

Money politics in elections, as well as what has happened in the village head elections that took place in 2024, is a very common phenomenon and is almost considered a natural thing in many areas, including in Sedarum Village. There are two candidates who both give money to the community with similar amounts. This practice is common and has become part of the local political culture that influences the way people vote. This money politics is done to buy the votes of the Sedarum community. If money is not given, then the individual will not vote. In the current language, giving money from village head candidates is more transactional and done openly (Astuti & Marlina, 2022). Interestingly, some residents accepted money from both candidates, which raises questions about how the community interprets and responds to this money politics in the current social context. The people of Sedarum Village seem to accept money politics as something commonplace. This phenomenon illustrates that money politics is not only a tool to win votes, but has also shaped the pattern of social and political interactions in Sedarum Village, even becoming part of the community's expectation to get money in the period leading up to the election. This indicates a strong social construction in which money has become a symbol of power and influence, as well as a medium for direct financial gain. This condition certainly creates a democratic dilemma, because the election of village heads, which should be based on leadership quality and vision and mission, is eroded by pragmatic money transactions.

Money politics also reflects the economic and social inequality of the Sedarum community. Many residents who have low economic conditions can easily accept offers of money from prospective village heads. According to research conducted by Awaludin (2021), the behavior of people who tend to be weak in obtaining political information is the main target of money politics. The cycle of money politics continues to repeat from one election to the next, because people become accustomed to and even “addicted” to political money. As a result, the democratic process at the village level has decreased in quality, where voters prioritize material rewards over rational considerations and the long-term interests of the village. The principles of direct, general, free, secret, honest, and fair elections must be prioritized (Hermawan & Sundary, 2022). In addition, in Islam, money politics is clearly prohibited and considered haram. Because money politics is included in the category of *risywah* or bribery, meaning giving something to someone with the aim that the person does or does not do something that is contrary to honesty and justice. Exactly what has happened in Sedarum village, the candidates for Village Head gave money to the community to buy people's votes. People who accept it are also not allowed in Islamic teachings. In the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah verse 188, Allah SWT forbids His people to eat other people's property by false means, including through the practice of bribery and money politics. The Prophet Muhammad also cursed those who give and receive bribes, showing how serious this prohibition is in Islam.

This prohibition is not only moral and religious, but also regulated in positive law in Indonesia, which threatens perpetrators of money politics with criminal penalties. And it is

clearly written in the 1945 Constitution, paragraph 1, Article 2, which reads that sovereignty is in the hands of the people and is carried out according to the Constitution. However, the reality is that in Sedarum Village, money politics or bribery practices are still taking place and are even considered commonplace by the community, as if the practice is considered correct, so it becomes a culture. In fact, accepting or giving political money means violating the principles of honesty, trustworthiness, and justice that are highly upheld in Islam. Therefore, money politics not only undermines democracy, but also has an impact on the moral and spiritual decay of society. Although money politics has become commonplace in Sedarum Village, religiously and legally, the practice is still not justified and must be avoided in order to create a clean, fair, and dignified village head election. The practice of money politics also shows the weakness of supervision and strict sanctions to enforce the rules in the implementation of village head elections, making money politics difficult to eradicate. Research conducted by Jupri et al. (2023) suggests that the study of the movement to build anti-money politics villages to prevent the occurrence of money politics practices can be prevented as much as possible. Usually, the Pilkades organizing committee focuses only on technical implementation without the authority to take action against money politics violations. This opens up space for village head candidates and their success teams to continue using money as a political tool without fear of legal consequences.

The phenomenon of the acceptance of money from both candidates by some Sedarum villagers also shows a clear social dynamic. The practice of money politics is the main cause of the emergence of leaders who are corrupt and not pro-people (Amal, I. 2022). This can be interpreted as a pragmatic strategy for citizens to gain maximum benefits without being tied to political loyalty. However, this can be interpreted as a pragmatic strategy for citizens to gain maximum benefits without being bound by political loyalty. However, this condition also causes conflict and social instability due to the unclear political stance of the community. Because money politics has become a culture, it is difficult to eliminate. Village head candidates who use money politics simultaneously demonstrate unhealthy competition and have the potential to undermine the village's democratic order. The practice of money politics can also be a cause of the fading of the moral values of village communities (Astuti & Marlina, 2022).

This research is important to reveal how Sedarum villagers construct social meanings of money politics and how the practice affects the democratic process in the village. Building anti-money politics villages should be a pilot project for regional Bawaslu in local elections to strengthen local democracy (Riwanto et al., 2022). By understanding the community's social construction of money politics, it is hoped that appropriate solutions can be found to reduce the practice of money politics and improve the quality of village head elections in the future. In addition, this research will also examine the factors behind money politics and its impact on the social and political structure in Sedarum Village. Money politics in village head elections is not only a problem of individuals or candidates, but this social phenomenon has taken root and affected various aspects of village life. Therefore, a comprehensive and participatory approach is needed to overcome this problem so that democracy at the village

level can run healthily and produce leaders who are truly qualified and trusted by the community.

In connection with the previous research that has been conducted above, the novelty of this research is how the Sedarum village community interprets money politics in the 2024 village head election, where the 2 candidates for the Village Head both gave money to the community and what became the community's guide to choosing the candidate for village head who won at that time.

Brief Review of Related Literature: Social Construction of Money Politics in Village Head Elections

In recent years, scholarly attention has focused on the persistence of money politics in Indonesian village head elections, revealing how these practices have become tightly interwoven with social, cultural, and economic life at the local level. Various studies point out that transactional politics is widely accepted as part of the electoral tradition in many villages, with voters often expecting some form of financial incentive during election periods. Hasan et al. (2023) documented that in Aceh, the habit of distributing money, goods, or services by candidates is not simply tolerated but frequently taken for granted by the electorate, particularly among established community members and even novice voters. Although such practices are widespread, the significance of other candidate attributes, such as age, education, and personal reputation, remains considerable, demonstrating that money politics is just one factor influencing voter decisions.

Sociocultural norms greatly influence the acceptance of money politics. Research by Sari and Putra (2025) highlights that receiving election-time incentives is shaped by local expectations and communal values, which collectively diminish the stigma once attached to clientelist exchanges. In many villages, these arrangements are seen not as forms of corruption but as natural extensions of community relationships. Consequently, transactional politics persists across electoral cycles, reinforcing patron-client ties and entrenching elite control at the village level. The regulatory landscape also plays a role in the entrenchment of these practices. Nasution (2025) points out the lack of clear and enforceable legal sanctions for money politics in village head contests. This ambiguity generates a permissive environment where rules are inconsistently applied and violations frequently go unpunished, undermining democratic quality and opportunities for genuine political competition. Pratama and Rahayu (2024) further note that these legal shortcomings disadvantage candidates who lack material resources, effectively prioritizing those with the financial means to engage in transactional campaigning. The structure of electoral contests thus frequently favors the wealthy over candidates deemed more capable or community-oriented.

Economic conditions are a fundamental factor driving the prevalence of money politics. Many villagers, facing limited resources and economic uncertainty, view elections as opportunities to secure immediate material benefits. Studies by Wulandari (2022) and Firdaus

and Hadi (2023) demonstrate that material hardship can override other considerations, leading individuals to justify accepting incentives as practical or necessary, even when aware of the broader consequences for democratic governance.

At the same time, how communities perceive and rationalize money politics is nuanced. According to Sutanto (2021), villagers often discuss vote buying not strictly in ethical or legal terms, but as an accepted mode of participation, influenced by shared experiences and everyday practicalities. This everyday understanding, shaped by phenomenological perspectives, helps explain why efforts to discourage money politics through education or moral appeals have thus far yielded only limited results.

Recent initiatives to counter these patterns have included strengthening voter education, mobilizing local monitoring groups, and building networks to encourage electoral integrity (Hasan et al., 2023; Ramadhan & Putri, 2024). However, meaningful progress is widely seen to depend on tackling underlying causes such as poverty, fragmented law enforcement, and the endurance of closed political networks. Research thus consistently concludes that curbing money politics requires more than short-term interventions; it calls for integrated reforms in law, civic education, and economic development to disrupt the resilient transactional logic that currently governs many village elections.

To sum up recent debates: money politics in Indonesia's village head elections is not simply an electoral tactic, but a phenomenon shaped by collective social constructions, material needs, and institutional contexts. Efforts to resolve these challenges must therefore be as multifaceted and nuanced as the practices themselves—combining legal innovation, economic improvement, and cultural change.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study, data collected through interviews, participatory observation. using the foundation of social construction theory from Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann to understand how the Sedarum Village community builds meaning and social reality related to money politics in the village head election. This approach was chosen because social construction theory emphasizes that social reality is not something fixed and objective, but is formed and understood through social interactions and social processes that occur continuously in society. Data were collected through interviews with Sedarum villagers who were involved in or directly experienced the phenomenon of money politics, either receiving money from one or both candidates for village head. In addition, participatory observation was conducted during the village head election process to directly observe the social dynamics and community interactions related to money politics. Documentation related to the implementation of the *pilkades* was also used as supporting data.

Data analysis was conducted by exploring the meanings built by the community through the process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, to understand how

money politics is not only an individual action but also a social construction that influences the behavior and mindset of the Sedarum Village community. According to Berger, the social construction process is explained through three main stages. The objectivation stage occurs when the results of these actions are considered real and generally accepted by the community, so that money politics becomes something that is “commonplace” and considered normal in the context of village head elections. Furthermore, the internalization stage is a process in which individuals in society absorb and accept these social realities into their consciousness, so that they interpret and carry out money politics as part of the prevailing social norms.

Externalization is the stage where the people of Sedarum Village create the practice of money politics through their actions and social interactions. In the 2024 Pilkades, both candidates for village head gave money to the community with the same nominal. Many of the Sedarum community received the money, and some even received it from both candidates at once. This action is not only an economic transaction, but also a form of social expression that builds the reality of money politics as something that is commonplace in the election process. Objectivation occurs when the practice of money politics, which was originally an individual or group action, begins to be considered a real social fact and is mutually accepted by the people of Sedarum Village. Money politics is no longer seen as a violation or something strange, but has become an ingrained social norm. The community considers giving money as part of a normal election process, so money politics becomes something objective and difficult to change because it has been embedded in their social life. Meanwhile, internalization is a process in which individuals in society absorb and live the reality of money politics as part of their awareness and values that have become their habits. The people of Sedarum Village accept politics as legitimate and acceptable in village social and political life. This makes money politics recur and become a tradition that is difficult to eliminate, because it has become part of the behavior of the community before the election is held.

Money Politics as a Social Reality Formed through a Social Construction Process

Money politics in the village head election in Sedarum Village has become a social reality that is formed and maintained through habits and meanings in the community. This practice appears and continues to recur because it has become part of the habits and social norms that are widely accepted by the villagers. An important element in the process of education and democratic parties is the formation of people's trust in elections (Susanti, 2021). In the 2024 Pilkades, both candidates openly gave the same amount of money to the community. The community also accepted the money, and some even received it from both candidates at once. This phenomenon shows how money politics has become something that is considered normal and commonplace in the village democratic process. The main purpose of elections is to give citizens the opportunity to express their voices and elect leaders who will represent them in government (Faizal, A. 2024). People no longer see giving money as a violation, but rather as part of the political mechanism that must exist in every election.

Money politics is not only about material things, but also about mutually beneficial social relationships. Village head candidates use money as a tool to gain support, while the community sees the money as compensation or their right to vote. In addition, the socioeconomic condition of the community, which is predominantly low-income, can strengthen the practice of money politics so that the offer of money or material assistance becomes an attraction that is difficult to resist. poverty is understood as a state of lack of money and goods to ensure survival (Kwalomine, 2021). This makes money politics not only a political strategy, but also an economic necessity for some citizens. It can be concluded that money politics is a social construction that involves interrelated economic and cultural factors.

This phenomenon also shows how traditional norms and values, such as honesty, justice, and mutual cooperation, have been replaced by pragmatic norms, which place money as the main tool in determining political choices. In legal norms, the practice of money politics is not justified because it will disrupt the principles of democracy (Nabilah et al., 2022). The attitude of the people who accepted money from both candidates at the same time indicates the flexibility and pragmatism in interpreting money politics. The community realizes that money politics is against religious norms and applicable laws. On the other hand, their social and economic conditions make it difficult for them to refuse the political money. This shows that money politics is a clear social construction that requires a deep understanding to be changed.

Religious Perspectives and Social Norms

In Islam, the practice of money politics is clearly prohibited and considered haram because it is a form of bribery (*risywah*) that destroys justice and honesty. Islam teaches that every individual should be honest, fair, and maintain trust, especially in choosing leaders who will bring goodness to society. Giving or receiving money to influence votes is contrary to religious principles and can damage the social and spiritual order of society. As for the term *siyasah*, *Siyasah* comes from the word *sasa*, which means organizing, managing, and governing, politics, and making policy (Faizal, A. 2024). The people of Sedarum Village actually realize that money politics is contrary to religious teachings. Many residents recognize that, religiously, receiving or giving political money is not allowed. However, this awareness is often outweighed by ingrained socioeconomic and cultural conditions. Difficult economic factors make people tend to accept money practically, while the long-standing culture of money politics makes this practice considered commonplace and difficult to avoid.

Social norms in Sedarum Village have also changed due to the open and massive practice of money politics. Traditional values such as *gotong royong*, honesty, and solidarity have begun to be replaced by more pragmatic and transactional patterns of relationships. A religious approach is one of the things that can be done to combat the practice of money politics (Fitriani et al., 2023). Money politics changes the way people behave, where social relationships are colored more by material exchanges rather than shared values.

This research also found a tension between religious and social norms and the ongoing practice of money politics. People are in a dilemma between following religious teachings and moral norms, and economic needs and social habits that have been formed. This proves that religious believers do not always practice their religion honestly and consequently (Wahid, A. 2021). This condition shows that the eradication of money politics is not sufficient only with a legal or religious approach, but also needs an approach that touches the socio-cultural and economic aspects of society. The community considers money politics as a sustenance that should not be rejected (Mubarak, 2021). The role of religious leaders and community leaders is very important to strengthen awareness and instill the values of honesty and justice in the village head election process.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that money politics in the village head election in Sedarum Village has become a social reality that is formed and maintained through interaction and the construction of shared meanings in the community. This practice is considered commonplace and has become part of the local political culture; the community pragmatically accepts money from prospective village heads in exchange for votes, or can be said to be vote buying. although this is contrary to religious norms and applicable laws, the reality is that money politics or bribery still continues until now. Socio-economic conditions and changes in social values and norms make money politics difficult to eliminate. Therefore, efforts to eradicate money politics must involve an approach that not only enforces the law, but also changes social construction through education, strengthening religious norms, and increasing public awareness so that village democracy can run cleanly and with dignity. So that leaders are elected according to the vision and mission of leadership and create quality leaders.

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