



Comparative Study of Money Politics in Batu City and Sampang Regency in Village Head Elections

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ABSTRACT

The practice of money politics at the village level has become a common phenomenon indicating a serious problem in village democratization. This study aims to conduct a comparative study of the practice of money politics that occurred in implementing village head elections in "S" Village, Batu City, and "P" Village, Sampang Regency, East Java. Comparative studies are important because these regions have different economic, social, and community characteristics. A qualitative descriptive research method is used in this article to clarify the process of answering research questions. The data were analyzed through collection, compaction, presentation, and conclusion. The study results show that money politics in each village in the two districts is almost identical. However, in practice, the control over voters in money politics during the Village Head Elections (Pilkades) shows very strict control in the Sampang district. It is even stronger than in Batu City.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of money politics in Indonesia is very interesting research. Money politics is an effort made by candidates that will indirectly influence voter preferences in determining their behavior in deciding whether to vote or not (Adhinata, 2019). Money politics seeks to distribute something individually to voters to gain political support. Money politics is also often interpreted as a means of influencing the public or voters by using material rewards in the process of contesting power (Sihidi, 2019; Cattelino, 2018; Suárez, 2016; Chonka, 2018; Fraser, 2016; Gulzar et al., 2022; Jones, 2022). This process is commonly known as the practice of buying and selling votes. Someone or a political actor gives the community money to vote for them at the time of voting (Okeke & Nwali, 2020; Marlin-Bennett, 2016).

The study of money politics has recently become a severe concern in post-authoritarian and developing countries like Indonesia (Misran et al., 2021; Virananda et al., 2021; Winters, 2016). This is because the fall of the despotic and repressive regime

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created an era of political openness marked by direct general elections, regional head elections, and village head elections. The problem is that direct participation has increasingly fostered the practice of money politics, which indicates a serious problem in the democratic process in Indonesia.

Money politics has become a normality in post-New Order elections (Muhtadi, 2019). This practice occurs in all political contests in Indonesia, starting from the national level (Sugiyanto, 2020) and the local (January 2018). Several studies have seen the practice of money politics occurring in the implementation of executive elections (Sugiyanto, 2020) and the legislature (Saputra & Hasanuddin, 2016). The research explains that people are easily exposed to money politics due to low education and economic levels.

There need to be more studies on the practice of money politics in village head elections in Indonesia. However, pre-reading is required in interpreting village head elections as a form of democracy. At least there are several reasons to support this statement. First, the Pilkades is not solely interpreted as a struggle for power in the context of leadership succession but also involves self-esteem and honor. The implication is that various campaign strategies are carried out, not only through legal means but also by illegal means, to achieve the power, one of which is through money politics. This practice is at least traceable in some studies, for example, findings in Kartodirdjo (1992), Kana (2001), and Rozy et al. (2020) who stated that in the Pilkades context, money politics was used as a tactic to win over candidates.

Several researchers also carried out subsequent studies. For example, what happened in Pilkades such as in Kedungjati Village (Putri et al., 2020), in Sumenep (Basri & Si, 2020), Kenep Village (Zain & Fauzi, 2021), Tanggul Kulon Village (Erinanda, 2019b), Cangakan Village (Khusni & Sardini, 2018) and Mekar Ayu Village (Pane et al., 2020). Furthermore, not only in Indonesia, studies also show that the practice of money politics also occurs in village head elections in other countries, such as South India (Still & Dusi, 2020). This study fills in some of the gaps in the research with the main argument using a comparative study of two locations with different social, economic, and community characteristics, namely "S" Village in Batu City and "P" Village in Sampang Regency.

In general, these differences are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Poverty Line and Human Development Indeks (HDI) in Batu City and Sampang Regency

No.	County town	Per Capita Income (2019)	Percentage of Poor Population (2019)	Human Development Index (2019)	Money Politics Practice Level (2019)
1.	Batu City	IDR 501,016	3.81% (7,890)	75.88%	27% Expect money politics 62% Knowing that there is money politics and letting it be
2.	Sampang Regency	IDR 346,075	20.71% (202,210)	61.49% The lowest is in East Java	75%

Source: Statistics Batu City, 2021; Statistics Sampang Regency, 2021; Kabar Madura, 2019

The table above shows that the practice of money politics is not due to low levels of education and economics. Based on the Human Development Index and Poor Population between Batu City and the Sampang Regency Government, there is no positive correlation with the practice of money politics. Even people with high HDI tend to ignore this practice. It needs more than high income and the opportunity to access good education to make people avoid the practice of money politics.

“S” Village, Batu City, held Pilkades on 28 August, 2022. Pilkades in this village were carried out simultaneously with four other villages, Pesanggrahan Village, Pandanrejo Village, Bulukerto Village, and Sumberbrantas Village, with a total of 20 candidates overall. Of the five regions, only “S” and Sumberbrantas were not followed by an incumbent.

Simultaneous Pilkades in Batu City were held based on the Decree of the Mayor of Batu City number 188.45/63/KEP/422.012/2022 dated 17 February 2022 (Arifin, 2022). The government allotted a budget of 1.2 billion for holding the simultaneous Pilkades. The budget details include 850 million rupiahs from Special Financial Assistance (BKK) and 350 million from the regional budget.

At the implementation of the Pilkades in “S” Village, four candidates for village heads participated, namely “YP”, “S”, “R”, and “HP”. There are 3,253 voters and 8 polling stations (TPS) (Editors, 2022). As a result, “HP” got a fairly high vote which was 1,578 votes. While the opponents below him, “YP”, got 907 votes, “S” 190, and “R” 129 (Azmi, 2022; Lid, 2022).

Pilkades Kota Batu is indeed prone to money politics. This vulnerability was also shown by the Anti-Gambling and Money Politics Task Force Team (Satgas) formation in Pilkades Batu City in 2022. This task force aims to oversee the pilkades and prevent money politics and gambling. In addition, the task force provides security, guarantees people's right to vote according to their conscience, and guarantees that the 2022 simultaneous Pilkades in Batu City will occur democratically, conductively, and orderly.

Meanwhile, “P” Village, Torjun District, Sampang Regency held Pilkades in 2019. This Pilkades was also held simultaneously with 37 other villages. The winner is pair number 3, “S”. This is the second time she has participated and obtained 1,087 votes in “P” Village, the highest among the other candidates. The researchers examine how the operationalization of money politics works in “S” and “P”. The recorded observations and interviews show how money politics occurs through various methods. This study aims to analyze the patterns of money politics work together with the networks involved.

METHOD

The type of research used in this research is qualitative research with a descriptive approach (Moeloeng, 2000). This type of research was chosen because of its ability to gain an in-depth understanding of events. Data was collected through interviews with five members of the Pilkades campaign team and sixteen people who received money from the candidates. Researchers also conducted participatory observations by involving themselves during the preparation and implementation stages of the village head elections. In addition, documentation data were obtained from police reports and mainstream news related to money politics.

Data analysis was carried out through an interactive model starting from data collection, compaction, data presentation, and conclusion (Miles & Huberman, 2014). In

this study, the researchers tested the validity of the data using the triangulation method, namely source triangulation, and checking the data obtained through various sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The character of voters in Batu City in the election can be categorized as voters who are vulnerable to being influenced by money-politics activities. Based on a survey conducted by the Intrans Institute in February, it was found that 71 percent of respondents voted for irrational reasons, such as class similarity, carrying out election routines, just participating in, and pragmatic considerations or money politics that benefit them ([Intrans Institute, 2017](#)). The Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) of Batu City survey regarding money politics showed that 27 percent of the people in Batu City knew about money politics and still hoped to get money politics or bribes in elections. It was also found that 62 percent of respondents answered that they knew about money politics and did not want to report it to the authorities, or in other words, they would just let it happen ([Hakim, 2019](#)).

Based on two surveys conducted at different timeframes, the voters in Batu City are still vulnerable to money politics. The voters in Batu City who are still reluctant to report money politics have increasingly allowed the candidate to carry out their actions safely without fear of being caught by the authorities. In addition, voters tend to accept the bribe, making it easy for the candidate to distribute their money and influence voters.

Quantitatively, there is no concrete evidence of the magnitude of the influence of money politics in Sampang Regency in the local elections. However, an in-depth survey on the threat of money politics in Sumenep Regency, Madura, reached 52.7 percent ([Amaludin, 2015](#)), could become a reference for money politics in Madura, including in Sampang Regency. The observation results show that the types of voters in Sampang Regency in the village head election are loyalists, floating masses, and transactional voters. However, in practice, all categories of voters are involved in the practice of money politics. The community also perceives that village head elections are a means of getting money quickly by giving money to chosen candidates.

An in-depth survey on the threat of money politics in Pilkades in Sampang Regency can be seen from the efforts of the Sampang Regency Government (Pemkab) in anticipating the practice of money politics in the implementation of simultaneous village head elections ([Aziz, 2017](#)). Anticipation of money politics by sending a joint team between the district government and security officers from the Sampang Police and the Sampang Regency Military Command 0828 as well as various meetings with community forums and community leaders can become prevention for money politics in Sampang Regency. This condition indicates that the practice of money politics in village head elections is still high.

Pilkades and Money Politics

The form of money politics that occurred and was given to voters in the election for the head of "S" Village in Batu City in 2022 and Petarongan Village, Sampang Regency, in 2022 is in the forms of vote buying, individual gifts, and pork barrel projects. In general, the form is described in table 1.

Table 1. The Practice of Money Politics in Pilkades in Sampang Regency and Batu City

No	Village Name	Forms of Money Politics	Network
1.	“S” Village, Batu City	a. Political money from 50,000 to 100,000 rupiahs	Success team, family head
		b. Pork barrel, position in village administration	Candidate for village head, youth leader
		c. Individual gift, staple commodities (sugar, oil and noodles)	Success team
2	“P” Village, Sampang Regency	a. <i>Vote Buying</i> : with money around 250,000 to 750,000 rupiahs	Success team / Elders in the family / Hamlet chief
		b. Individual gifts, food, and cigarettes at Al-Qur’an recitation events	Candidate for village head

Source: Proccesed by Author (2022)

In Batu City, the social network in carrying out the practice of money politics involves many people, including community leaders, family heads, and youth leaders, that can influence their followers. The practice of money politics also involves organizations at the neighborhood (RT) and hamlet (RW) levels. In addition, the spread of money politics started in the family, where the success team distributed money to their closest relatives.

Based on data from BPS Kota Batu, in 2021, the number of family heads in “S” village was 1,432. The results of interviews with ten family heads in “S” village show that money politics occurs in various forms, both in the form of money and goods (interviews with informants 1-10). Provisions in the form of goods, in this case, such as groceries, are considered capable of strengthening social relations, especially those given basic materials needed by the community in daily life. This gift is given free of charge or without conditions to voters. They are only encouraged to vote for specific village head candidates. The strategy of giving money or goods is given to the family head or the elders in the family because they are considered capable of influencing other family members (success team interview, informant 9, informants 1, 2, and 5).

In addition to involving the head of the family, the use of RT and RW chief is widely used by prospective village heads in mobilizing the community (informants 4, 5 and 8). The practice of giving money to residents of the neighborhood in their activities (informant 8). In addition, the neighborhood chief deliberately invited its residents to come to the village head candidate’s house, then the money was handed over to the residents (informants 4 and 5).

The role of the neighborhood chief is effective in distributing money to the community because they are closer to the community and are quite respected because of their position. They understand the culture of the local community. It will be easier for them to approach the community and distribute the money or the item. The distribution was done individually by visiting residents’ houses directly and inviting residents to the neighborhood chief’s house. In contrast, the distribution of money politics and the giving of goods as a group was done in forums or housewives activities (informant 4).

Social networks work because they have complete data on the community in the neighborhood (team success, informant 9), where the neighborhood chief makes a list of names of recipients of the money. The recipient list is easy to make as the neighborhood chief automatically holds all the people's data in that area. Making a list of recipient names is also a strategy candidates use to ensure that the number of votes obtained follows the amount of money distributed based on the list. This indirectly puts pressure or encouragement on the community to vote for these candidates because the data is recorded, and they must submit a photocopy of their ID card. The voter mobilization network for village head elections in Batu City has a role in building the village head's image, which tends to become a tool in mobilizing government votes through money politics.

In addition to money politics, village head candidates use youth networks at the village level as votes mobilization machines, one of which is through the former chairman of the village children's forum, informant "Z" (informant 10). The network of friends, communication skills, and influence of "Z" became the reasons for the village head candidate to make "Z" a team member (informant 9). "Z" was promised to become one of the village officials when the village head candidate he supported became village head. Based on the information, after the village head's election, there was one vacant village apparatus position due to retirement. However, the practice of money politics carried out by one of the village head candidates does not guarantee that the village head candidate will be elected.

Two forms of money politics exist in the village head election in Sampang regency: individual gifts and vote buying. Individual gift are usually made directly by the candidates before implementing village head elections. Candidates for village heads usually give the gift at weddings and *tahlilan*. They provide food or money for these activities. The aim is to attract the sympathy of citizens to vote for them.

The practice of buying and selling votes is commonplace for village head candidates. As stated by one of the candidates, "I do not have people, but if I have money, I will spend it." The community and candidates agree and think they can practice money politics in every village head election.

The practice of money politics in village head elections is usually in the form of Vote Buying. Vote buying means buying and selling votes by buying voter invitation cards. Voter invitation cards are required to vote at TPS. Brokers for each candidate try to buy voter invitation cards from the public at a price they request, especially invitation cards from voters who seem inclined to vote for another candidate.

The statement by the candidate for village head emphasized that they would pay any price to buy the invitation cards to reduce candidates' votes from the opposing party. In the future, this invitation card will still be assessed, which are their supporters, and which ones can still be influenced again to vote for them to be village head based on the results of the vote mapping they have. For those considered to be supporters of other candidates, the invitation cards that have been purchased will be burned to reduce the votes of the opposing party. They can no longer use their voting rights in village head elections because, based on regulations mutually agreed upon between the committee and village head candidates, people who have entered the Permanent Voters List (DPT) and received an invitation to vote cannot exercise their right to vote when they come to TPS and do not carry invitation cards.

Vote purchases were made by buying voters' invitation cards collected by the campaign team. Invitation cards for the village head election were distributed on D-1 before the village head election. This card distribution started at seven in the morning and was distributed by each hamlet chief accompanied by one witness from each village head candidate. When the election invitation cards were distributed, the success team from each candidate immediately came to collect the invitation cards. Each voter submits their ballot card to the success team. This success team is a member of the village community known to support each candidate.

In addition to buying voter invitation cards, the success team is trying to influence floating voters and voters from other candidate loyalists to submit voter invitation cards. Whatever price is asked, the success team will pay it. The goal is to reduce the votes of candidates from opposing parties. The costs incurred can even reach 750,000 rupiahs.

“Invitation cards belonging to the people (the right to vote) are collected and can be bought even if they ask for a high price. If the card belongs to an enemy supporter, it will still be bought cheaply” (village head success team).

Invitation cards identified as loyalists are kept at the prospective village head's house. Voting cards are then distributed on election day. After receiving directions from the success team, these supporters were given food, drink, and pocket money. The pocket money they received varied from one hundred to two hundred and fifty thousand rupiahs. They were then directed and escorted to the polling station. The polling place consists of two entrances: the first layer consists of one entrance, the second layer consists of seven entrances representing each hamlet, and one exit. This door model provides convenience for voters and is designed to prevent the voters without cards from coming.

DISCUSSIONS

This study confirms other research findings ([Akbar et al., 2023](#); [Alam et al., 2021](#); [Aspinall & Rohman, 2017](#); [Deviria, 2017](#); [Erinanda, 2019a](#); [Fitriyah, 2016](#); [Hidayat & Miskan, 2019](#); [Jatri & Azalia, 2022](#); [Mulyadi & Maulana, 2022](#); [Ramadhan et al., 2018](#); [Virananda et al., 2021](#)) that Pilkades results in money politics. All of these findings show the destruction of village democracy because it facilitates the prevalence of money politics, which directly impacts the quality of elected leadership.

Money politics is clear evidence of the declining quality of democracy in the village. This negative phenomenon is part of the failure of a series of democratic transitions in Indonesia. It has been explained by [Markoff \(1996\)](#) as a hybrid phenomenon in a transitional democracy. At the same time, the democratic transition will be faced diametrically between democratic elements such as elections and non-democratic elements in the form of money politics. That is why substantial democracy, one of which produces democratic and pro-community welfare leadership elected through healthy circulation (Pilkades), fails because money politics co-opt it. Money politics at the village level has become a common strategy in mobilizing support, indicating the elite's and community's weak political awareness.

Money politics in the two villages has become a vote mobilization tool that candidates must use to be elected. The situation in these two villages has similar characteristics to other villages due to several factors. The first factor is political factors. It is characterized by the absence of ideology and political ideas from candidates.

Candidates' programs could not convince the community because they were considered too abstract, and their implementation was complex. The community's experience of the failure of previous similar programs has strengthened the pessimism and pragmatism of the community so that the platform does not become the main foothold of the community in choosing. In that context, the money finally became one of the determinants.

The second factor is legal factors. Village Law Number 6/2014 has not explicitly regulated the handling of money politics as part of criminal practices. This differs from constitution Number 7/2017 on Elections and constitution Number 10/2016 on Pilkada, which regulates money politics in detail. This gap and less comprehensive legal aspect complicate handling money politics cases in the village.

The third factor is cultural factors. Money politics is deeply rooted in the permissive character of village communities. This is inseparable from the fact that money politics has occurred for so long that it is considered a culture. Rural communities find it challenging to avoid money politics because it is considered an attitude of maintaining harmony by not rejecting other people's gifts. It must be exchanged for support as a form of reciprocity for the gift. For the people of T village, Pilkades are a source for them to get money, so they eagerly await it. Money politics for them is a necessity, as well as the legislative and presidential elections implementation.

The fourth is economic factors. [Burhanudin Muhtadi's \(2020\)](#) research shows that money politics exist in communities with weak economies. In the context of Pilkades, this correlation is strong because poverty in Indonesia is mainly found in villages. Data released by the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2022 shows that Indonesia's disparity between rural and urban poverty is still high ([Widyastuti, 2022](#)). In March 2022, 7.5% of the Indonesian population was poor in urban areas.

Meanwhile, in rural areas, the percentage of poor people reached 12.29%. In the case of these two villages, there is something different because money politics turns out to occur at all levels, including the upper economic community. The spread of money politics to all segments of society shows how substantial the destruction of money politics is and the political pragmatism of the community that does not look at the background of financial ability. However, the majority of recipients are still those with low economic backgrounds.

The above phenomenon shows that money politics is hard to eliminate in the electoral process at the village level. The factors are so complex that the handling process must be comprehensive and integrated. It must start with the amendment of the Village Law, which designs Pilkades to provide rigid rules regarding handling criminal acts of money politics. Hence, the implementation of money politics prevention is better. Furthermore, public political education must continue to be improved so people can become critical voters. Awareness of the accountability of Pilkades for village progress will make the community collectively reject money politics and, at the same time, can be a vital force in overseeing the Pilkades. The experience of several places shows that money politics can be minimized due to a community movement that firmly rejects money politics through close supervision. Such a phenomenon requires the role of other people, especially civil society.

CONCLUSION

Money politics is a common phenomenon in Indonesia's democratization process. It means that money politics has undermined all levels of the electoral process in

Indonesia and is very difficult to eradicate because it is considered a common practice and a necessity for candidates to win and is considered permissive by society.

These two regions show almost the same three patterns, namely the practice of vote buying, individual gifts, and pork barrel projects. In practice, the control over voters in money politics during the Pilkades shows strict control in the Sampang regency. It is even stronger than in Batu City.

This research contributes to showing the operation of money politics in the village, from its background to its increasingly diverse modes. This information will assist relevant parties in preventing money politics in the village. The limitations lie in the need for a more in-depth exploration of the reasons for the involvement of the middle/upper economic class in money politics and the impact of money politics after the village head election has been completed, especially for recipients and village development.

Future studies can explain the motive of the upper middle class to participate in the money politics circle and the consequences obtained by the recipients of money politics if the candidates they supported lost or were caught not voting for candidates who gave them money.

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