

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF MONEY POLITICS IN THE 2024 ELECTIONS : ANALYSIS OF MORAL VALUE AND INTEGRITY

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ABSTRAK. Penelitian ini mengkaji persepsi mahasiswa Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan tentang politik uang dalam konteks Pemilu 2024, dengan fokus pada analisis nilai moral dan integritas. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan wawancara mendalam dengan 56 mahasiswa yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa memiliki persepsi kritis terhadap praktik politik uang, memandangnya sebagai ancaman serius terhadap integritas demokrasi. Mereka mengidentifikasi dampak negatif politik uang terhadap kepercayaan publik, partisipasi politik, dan kesetaraan ekonomi-politik. Dari perspektif moral, mahasiswa secara tegas menolak politik uang sebagai pelanggaran etika. Dalam konteks Pemilu Serentak 2024, mereka menyadari tantangan logistik dan pentingnya pendidikan pemilih. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan kesenjangan antara kesadaran kritis mahasiswa dan peluang partisipasi mereka dalam sistem politik, menyoroti perlunya upaya sistematis untuk memberdayakan mahasiswa sebagai agen perubahan dalam memperkuat integritas demokrasi Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Politik uang; Persepsi mahasiswa; Integritas demokrasi; Pemilu 2024; Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan

ABSTRACT. This study examines the perceptions of Civic Education students regarding money politics in the context of the 2024 Elections, focusing on the analysis of moral values and integrity. Using a qualitative approach, this research involves in-depth interviews with 56 students selected through purposive sampling. The results indicate that students have a critical perception of money politics practices, viewing them as a serious threat to democratic integrity. They identify the negative impacts of money politics on public trust, political participation, and economic-political equality. From a moral perspective, students firmly reject money politics as an ethical violation. In the context of the 2024 Simultaneous Elections, they are aware of logistical challenges and the importance of voter education. This research reveals a gap between students' critical awareness and their opportunities for participation in the political system, highlighting the need for systematic efforts to empower students as agents of change in strengthening the integrity of Indonesian democracy.

Keywords: Money politics; Student perceptions; Democratic integrity; 2024 Elections; Civic Education

INTRODUCTION

Money politics has become an ingrained phenomenon in democratic systems in various countries, including Indonesia. This phenomenon not only threatens the integrity of the election process, but also has the potential to erode public trust in democratic institutions. In the context of Indonesia, the practice of money politics has long been a concern for researchers and political observers. Muhtadi (2019), in his book "Vote Buying in Indonesia: Election Bribery Mechanisms," reveals a worrying finding that around 33% of Indonesia voters have received offers of money or goods in elections. This finding confirms that money politics is not just a fringe problem, but a serious threat to the quality of democracy in Indonesia. The perception of students, especially Civic Education (PKn) students, towards money politics is a crucial aspect in understanding contemporary political dynamics. As a generation that is expected to be agents of change and guardians of democratic values, the views of PKn students can be an indicator of how well civic education has instilled the values of integrity and political ethics. Research by Latipraja Delmana (2020) shows that students

tend to have a critical attitude towards the practice of money politics, but there is still ambivalence in responding to this phenomenon at a practical level. This finding paves the way for further exploration of the complexity of PKn student perceptions in the context of the 2024 Election.

The complexity of students' perceptions of money politics cannot be separated from the broader socio-cultural context. Aspinall & Berenschot (2019), in "Democracy for Sale: Elections, Clientelism, and the State in Indonesia," argues that the practice of money politics in Indonesia is rooted in a long-standing patronage system. This system creates reciprocal expectations between politicians and constituents, which are often manifested in material transactions. Understanding this context is crucial to analyzing why some students may see money politics as an "inevitability" in the political process, while others view it as a threat to the integrity of democracy. The negative impact of money politics on the quality of democracy cannot be ignored. Prianto (2024), in his article "Oligarchs and Democracy in Indonesia," argues that money politics strengthens the dominance of economic elites in the political process, which in turn can result in policies that are biased against the

interests of the group. This has the potential to create a vicious circle of corruption and inequality that is difficult to break. In this context, the perception and attitude of PKn students towards money politics is very important because they are expected to be at the forefront of promoting clean and integrity political practices.

A study conducted by Puannandini et al. (2023) on “Strategies to Prevent Money Politics at the Grassroots Level” highlights the importance of political education and strengthening critical awareness in society, especially among young voters. PKn students, with their educational background, have great potential to become agents of change in this effort. However, the effectiveness of their role largely depends on the extent to which they themselves understand and overcome the phenomenon of money politics. In a global context, the practice of money politics is not a unique phenomenon in Indonesia. A comparative study conducted by Hasan et al. (2023) in several developing countries shows a similar pattern in the practice of “vote buying”, albeit with variations in form and intensity. Understanding this global perspective is essential for Civic Education students to develop a more comprehensive critical analysis of the phenomenon of money politics. Money politics not only affects the integrity of elections but also has a significant impact on the quality of leadership produced. A study by Sjahrir et al. (2013) shows that areas in Indonesia with a high prevalence of money politics tend to experience a decline in the quality of governance. This shows that the practice of money politics not only directly damages the democratic process but also has a long-term effect on the effectiveness of government and regional development.

In the context of Civic Education students, it is important to understand that their perception of money politics is not formed in a vacuum. Factors such as socio-economic background, media exposure, and personal political experience can influence how they perceive this phenomenon. Research by Abdurrohman (2021) revealed that students from regions with high political competition tend to have a more complex understanding of the dynamics of money politics, although this does not mean that they agree with the practice. The role of social media in shaping students’ perceptions of money politics cannot be ignored. A study by Anshari (2013) showed that the dissemination of information and discussions about the practice of money politics on social media platforms significantly influenced students’ critical attitudes. However, at the same time, social media can also serve as a means to normalize the practice,

especially when the narrative that circulates tends to portray money politics as a “common” occurrence in political contests.

Another important aspect to consider is how PKn students’ perception of money politics correlates with their understanding of the concept of active citizenship. Abdurrohman (2021) found in his research that students who have a high level of understanding of political participation and active citizenship tend to have a more critical attitude towards the practice of money politics. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening civic education as an instrument to build resistance to practices that undermine democratic integrity. In a global context, it is important to understand that money politics is not an isolated phenomenon in Indonesia. A comparative study conducted by Hicken et al. (2018) in several Southeast Asian countries shows variations in the form and intensity of money politics practices, influenced by factors such as electoral systems, economic development levels, and the strength of democratic institutions. Understanding this comparative perspective is important for PKn students to develop a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the phenomenon of money politics in Indonesia.

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on the perception of PKn students in the context of the 2024 Election. Unlike previous studies that tended to look at the phenomenon of money politics in general or focus on its impact on election results, this study aims to dig deeper into how prospective educators and future leaders view this practice. By analyzing the moral values and integrity held by PKn students, this research is expected to provide new insights into the effectiveness of civic education in forming a critical attitude towards destructive political practices. Furthermore, this study will also explore how the perception of PKn students can affect their role as agents of change in the future. As aspiring educators and opinion leaders, their attitudes and understanding of the practice of money politics will have a multiplied impact on the next generation. Therefore, research on the perception of PKn students is not only important to understand the current conditions, but also to formulate long-term strategies in combating the practice of money politics and strengthening the integrity of democracy in Indonesia. By combining various perspectives from previous studies and filling in the gaps in the existing literature, this study aims to provide a deeper and contextual understanding of PKn students’ perceptions of money politics in the 2024 elections. The results of this study are expected to make a significant contribution in formulating a more effective civic education strategy and in an

effort to strengthen the integrity of democracy in Indonesia.

Money politics has become an ingrained phenomenon in democratic systems in various countries, including Indonesia. To understand the complexity of this phenomenon, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive review of various aspects related to it, ranging from definition, impact, to prevention efforts. Fransiska Adelina (2019) explained that one of the causes or potential of political corruption is vote buying, which is used to buy and sell voter support. However, as quoted from Bumke (2014), there is no standard definition of vote buying. The term “money politics” is often used extensively to refer to various forms of political corruption, clientelism, and vote buying. The diversity of use of these terms reflects the complexity of the phenomenon and the challenges of identifying and overcoming it. Robin Hodess (2004) provides a more specific definition of political corruption, which is the abuse of power by political leaders or elected officials to gain personal benefits aimed at increasing their power or wealth. This definition emphasizes the aspects of abuse of power and personal motives behind acts of political corruption. Furthermore, Hodess explained that in terms of time, political corruption can occur before, during, and after someone holds public office. This phenomenon that occurred during the election process is then specifically referred to as money politics.

In the context of Indonesia, money politics has become a special concern, especially in the election of regional heads (*pilkada*). Several studies (Haryani, 2015; Marsudi & Sunarso, 2019; Nabila, Prananingtyas & Azhar, 2020) shows that money politics is widely practiced to gain and control a large number of votes in local elections. This phenomenon not only threatens the integrity of the democratic process but also reflects the gap between the ideal of democracy and the reality on the ground. As stated by Khairazi (2015) and Seran (2016), a good democracy should be based on the principles of honesty and justice, but in practice, there are often irregularities such as money politics in regional elections. Aspinall & Berenschot (2019) in their research revealed that the practice of money politics has deeper roots than just vote buying and selling transactions. They argue that money politics is often closely linked to a broader patronage system, where elected politicians tend to repay their supporters’ ‘investments’ through biased policies and unfair allocation of public resources. These findings highlight that the impact of money politics is not only limited to the integrity of the electoral process, but also has long-term consequences on the quality of governance and sustainable development. Paramita (2021) in her

research found that the prevalence of money politics in Indonesia is still relatively high, with an estimated 33% of voters having received offers of money or goods in elections. This figure shows that despite preventive efforts, the practice of money politics is still a serious challenge in Indonesia’s democratic system.

The findings also underscore the urgency to understand the factors driving the sustainability of this practice, including socio-economic conditions, levels of political education, and the effectiveness of law enforcement. In an effort to prevent money politics, Aspinall & Sukmajati (2015) identified several strategies that have been implemented in various regions in Indonesia. Among them are strengthening community-based election monitoring, anti-money political education campaigns, and increasing transparency in campaign financing. However, the effectiveness of this strategy still needs to be further evaluated, given the complexity and adaptability of money politics practices. The development of information technology also brings a new dimension to the dynamics of money politics. Iryani & Syam (2023) and Wiguna (2017) examined how social media and instant messaging apps have changed the way political transactions are conducted, making them more difficult to detect and prove. These findings show that efforts to prevent money politics need to adapt to technological developments. On the other hand, technology also offers the potential to increase transparency and accountability in the electoral process. Sari (2024), for example, explores the potential use of blockchain technology to prevent manipulation of voter data and track the flow of campaign funds. Another important aspect to consider is the perception and attitude of voters, especially the younger generation, towards the practice of money politics. Abdurrohman (2021) found that although most students are aware of the negative impact of money politics, there is still ambivalence in their attitudes when faced with real situations. These findings show the importance of civic education that focuses not only on knowledge but also on the formation of values and character.

From a broader perspective, Winters (2013) argues that money politics is a manifestation of deeper economic and political inequality in society. He emphasized that efforts to eradicate money politics must be accompanied by more comprehensive reforms of the political and economic system to reduce the dominance of elites and increase equitable access to political resources. This literature review also includes several concrete cases that illustrate the potential of money politics in Indonesia. For example, the case of a legislative candidate from Golkar in West Sulawesi who was caught

distributing money to voters, the case of the Deputy Regent in North Padang Lawas Regency who became a suspect in money politics, and the arrest of the campaign team and legislative candidates in Karo on suspicion of vote buying. These cases show that the practice of money politics is still rampant and involves various levels of politicians, from legislative candidates to elected officials. This literature review describes the complexity of the phenomenon of money politics, starting from its definition, impact, to prevention efforts. Through the various studies and cases discussed, it can be seen that money politics is not only a technical issue in elections, but also reflects broader challenges in the democratic system and the socio-economic structure of society. A comprehensive understanding of these various aspects is very important in analyzing students' perceptions of money politics in the 2024 elections, as well as in formulating effective strategies to strengthen the integrity of democracy in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach, which according to Hamid (2011:63) is a type of research used to research a group of people, objects, conditions, thought systems, or events in the present. The qualitative approach was chosen because of its ability to explore and deeply understand complex social phenomena such as students' perceptions of money politics. This method allows researchers to explore the nuances and context of the participants' views, which are difficult to achieve through a quantitative approach. The data used in this study is primary data, obtained directly from the first source in the field. Primary data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with students of the Pancasila and Civic Education program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Khairun University, Ternate. In-depth interviews were chosen because they allowed researchers to explore in detail the views, experiences, and attitudes of students towards the phenomenon of money politics. In selecting research participants, the purposive sampling technique was used to select 56 students who were respondents. Purposive sampling was chosen because it allows researchers to select participants based on certain criteria that are relevant to the research objectives. The criteria for selecting participants include: (1) active students of the Pancasila and Civic Education program, (2) have taken at least 4 semesters of lectures, and (3) have basic knowledge of the electoral system in Indonesia. The number of 56 participants was determined based on data saturation considerations, where the addition of participants no longer produced significant new information.

The interview process is carried out in a semi-structured manner, using pre-prepared interview guidelines. The interview guide includes key questions surrounding students' understanding of money politics, their experiences (if any) related to the practice of money politics, their views on the impact of money politics on democracy, and the attitudes and moral values they hold regarding this phenomenon. Each interview lasts about 60-90 minutes and is recorded with the permission of the participant to ensure accuracy in the transcription and analysis process. To validate the data, this study uses a triangulation technique. Triangulation was carried out in three ways: (1) source triangulation, by interviewing students from different generations and socio-economic backgrounds, (2) method triangulation, by combining the results of interviews with participant observations during focus group discussions held as part of lecture activities, and (3) researcher triangulation, where the data analysis process involved more than one researcher to minimize individual bias. Data analysis was carried out using a thematic analysis approach. The analysis process includes several stages: (1) Familiarization with the data through transcription and repeated reading, (2) Initial coding to identify patterns in the data, (3) Search for potential themes, (4) Review and refinement of themes, (5) Definition and naming of themes, and (6) Writing reports. This analysis process is carried out iteratively, with researchers moving back and forth between raw data, code, and emerging themes.

To ensure the credibility and dependability of the research, several additional steps are taken. First, member checking is carried out by returning the interview transcript and initial interpretation to the participant to ensure accuracy. Second, peer debriefing is carried out by involving other researchers who are not directly involved in data collection to provide an external perspective on the analysis process. Finally, trail audits are maintained by documenting in detail every step in the research process, from data collection to drawing conclusions. The study also considers ethical aspects by ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the interview, and they were given the right to withdraw from the study at any time. All data is stored securely and can only be accessed by the research team. With this comprehensive methodological approach, the research aims to produce a deep understanding and nuance of the perception of Citizenship Education students towards money politics in the context of the 2024 Election, as well as analyze the moral values and integrity that underlie these perceptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. General Perception of Students on Money Politics

The results of the study revealed that the majority of students have a negative perception of the practice of money politics in elections. This perception can be analyzed from several aspects:

1. Violation of Democratic Principles

Students view money politics as a serious violation of the principles of healthy democracy. They identified that this practice is contrary to the concept of equality and fairness in the electoral process. A critical analysis of these findings shows that students have a strong understanding of the foundations of democracy and are able to identify threats to them.

2. Actors and Methods of Money Politics

Students show high awareness of the main actors of money politics, namely sympathizers, party cadres, and election candidates. They were also able to identify various methods used, such as voter registration manipulation, direct vote buying, and attempts to influence election officials. An in-depth analysis of this understanding shows that students have a fairly comprehensive knowledge of the dynamics of money politics, which may come from direct observation or access to relevant information.

3. Impact on Democratic Integrity

Students emphasized that money politics undermines the integrity of democracy and promotes corruption and abuse of power. A critical analysis of this perception shows that students are able to relate micro practices (money politics) to macro consequences (erosion of the democratic system). This shows a fairly high level of systemic thinking among students.

B. The Impact of Money Politics on the Democratic System

1. Erosion of Public Trust

Students identified a direct relationship between money politics and the decline in public trust in the political system. An in-depth analysis of these perceptions reveals that students understand the concept of government legitimacy and how corrupt practices can threaten it. This shows a fairly high level of political literacy among students.

2. Public Participation in the Political Process

Students argue that money politics can weaken the motivation of citizens to actively participate in the political process. A critical analysis of this view shows that students understand the importance of public participation in a healthy democracy.

However, it is questionable whether students have concrete solutions to increase public participation in the midst of the rampant practice of money politics.

3. Economic and Political Inequality

Students associate money politics with the broader problem of economic inequality. An in-depth analysis of this perception shows that students are able to relate economic issues to political dynamics. It shows a holistic understanding of the factors that affect the democratic process.

C. Moral and Ethical Dimensions of Money Politics

1. Corruption of Basic Values

Students firmly stated that money politics is unacceptable from a moral and ethical point of view. A critical analysis of this attitude shows that students have high ethical standards in terms of politics. However, it is necessary to explore further how they will respond to moral dilemmas when faced directly with the offer of money politics.

2. Normalization of Unethical Behavior

Some students expressed concern that the normalization of money politics could erode ethical standards in society more broadly. An in-depth analysis of these concerns shows that students understand the domino effect of unethical behavior in politics on the morale of society as a whole.

D. Student Perception in the Context of Simultaneous Elections

1. Logistics Complexity

Students are aware of the logistical challenges in holding simultaneous elections. A critical analysis of this understanding shows that students have a good knowledge of the technical aspects of elections. However, it is necessary to further explore whether they have innovative ideas to overcome this challenge.

2. Voter Burden and "Ballot Fatigue"

Students identified the potential for "ballot burnout" due to the large number of options in simultaneous elections. An in-depth analysis of this perception shows that students understand the complexity of voter decision-making. However, it is necessary to further investigate how these perceptions affect their own tendency to participate in elections.

3. Voter Education Challenges

Students emphasized the importance of comprehensive voter education. A critical analysis of this view shows students' awareness of the important role of political literacy. However, it is necessary to explore further whether they feel

educated enough to make the right decisions in the simultaneous elections.

E. Political Dynamics Ahead of the 2024 Election

1. Interest in the Candidate Registration Process

Students show high interest in the registration process for presidential and vice presidential candidates. An in-depth analysis of this interest reveals that students are actively following the latest political developments. This indicates a high level of political awareness, but it is necessary to further examine the extent of their understanding of the implications of the various political configurations that emerge.

2. Understanding the Factors Influencing Voter Behavior

Students identified three main models that influence voter behavior: sociological, psychological, and rational choice. Critical analysis of this understanding shows that students have good theoretical knowledge of voter behavior. However, it is necessary to further explore how they apply this understanding in analyzing voter behavior in their own environment.

F. Comparison with Previous Research

The findings of this study are in line with Muhtadi's (2020) research which shows the prevalence of money politics practices in Indonesia. However, this research provides a unique perspective from the perspective of students as first-time voters. A critical analysis of this comparison shows that while the practice of money politics is still prevalent, awareness and critical attitudes among students can be a starting point for change. This research also strengthens the findings of Hidayat et al. (2023) about the gap between students' political awareness and their opportunities for participation. An in-depth analysis of this phenomenon shows the need for systematic efforts to bridge these gaps and empower students as agents of change in the political system.

G. Implications and Recommendations

Based on an in-depth analysis of student perceptions, several implications and recommendations can be formulated:

1. **Strengthening Political Education:** There needs to be a systematic effort to improve political education among students, not only about the theory of democracy but also about practical ways to participate in and supervise the political process.
2. **Student Empowerment in Election Supervision:** Election organizing institutions need to consider special programs that involve students in election supervision, utilizing their critical awareness.

3. **Innovation in Anti-Money Politics Campaigns:** A new approach is needed in anti-money politics campaigns that utilize students' perspectives and creativity.

4. **Further Research:** Further research is needed to explore how students' critical perceptions can be transformed into concrete actions in combating money politics and strengthening election integrity.

Students' perception of money politics in the 2024 election shows a high level of critical awareness. However, the challenge is how to turn this awareness into concrete actions to strengthen the integrity of Indonesia's democracy. This research paves the way for further exploration of the role of students as agents of change in Indonesia's political system.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that Civic Education students have a critical perception of the practice of money politics in the 2024 Election. They view this phenomenon as a serious threat to the integrity of democracy, violating the principles of equality and justice in the electoral process. Students demonstrate a deep understanding of the complexities of money politics, including the actors involved, the methods used, and their impact on the democratic system as a whole. They identified a relationship between money politics and erosion of public trust, declining political participation, and increasing economic-political inequality. From a moral and ethical perspective, students categorically reject the practice of money politics, considering it as a violation of basic values and potentially normalizing unethical behavior in society. In the context of the 2024 Simultaneous Elections, students are aware of logistical challenges and the potential for "ballot fatigue", emphasizing the importance of comprehensive voter education. They also showed a keen interest in current political dynamics, including the candidate registration process and the factors that influence voter behavior. The findings of this study highlight the gap between students' critical awareness and their opportunities for participation in the political system. The implication is that systematic efforts are needed to empower students as agents of change, including strengthening political education, involvement in election supervision, and innovation in anti-money politics campaigns. In conclusion, although students demonstrate a high level of awareness and understanding of the negative impact of money politics, the main challenge is to turn this awareness into concrete actions to strengthen the integrity of Indonesia's democracy.

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