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INDONESIAN ELECTIONS IN THE SHADOW OF MONEY POLITICS: STRENGTHENING STAKEHOLDERS' COMMITMENT AND CREATING ANTI-MONEY POLITICS VILLAGES

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the traditional populist issue of money politics within Indonesian general elections, using Meranti Islands Regency, Riau Province, as its concrete case. Several previous studies indicate that money politics have been integral in the general elections at both local and national levels. This study thus discusses the practice of money politics in the case of Meranti Islands Regency general elections. This study was conducted from July to August 2017 using qualitative methods. The data collection was carried out by interviewing 22 informants who were selected purposively. They were matched with observations and document data followed by

qualitative analysis. This research found that the region has complicated problems such as: (1) a high poverty rate, (2) a lack of public understanding of money politics and its effects, (3) a lack of a monitoring system, and (4) a weak justice system. To address these issues, formal and non-formal institutions should be systematically enhanced and empowered. This should begin with election committees, which must be held accountable from the state to the village levels. It is also recommended to establish anti-money politics villages as a means of stimulating political education and ensuring the rule of law.

Keywords: Local election, money politics, electoral fraud, anti-money politics

INTRODUCTION

After decades of practice, money politics has become a habitual and even cultural part of Indonesian society, especially during national and regional elections. Today, many Indonesians see electoral campaigns as an opportunity to receive free money from political candidates (Pahlevi et al. 2019: 111). One survey found that vote buying is accepted by over one-third (34%) of all respondents (Thornley 2014: 9); as such, vote buying—a form of money politics that has been central in Indonesia's election processes—is perceived as a natural element of elections (Mas'oed and Savirani 2011: 78; Muhtadi 2018: vi). In such situations, voters feel naturally indebted to donors and are more likely to support the grantor (Nurdin 2016: 16).

Money politics has been perceived as a regular social practice. It does not only involve candidates, who often employ money politics to gain votes and secure elections, but affects almost all elements of society, including executive and political officials (Mokodompis et al. 2018: 127). From a political sociological perspective, this can be seen as a form of "social exchange", one that is continually reproduced and embraced as part of reciprocity of political interaction. In other words, reciprocity is a prerequisite for realising a balanced social exchange.

In Indonesia, money politics has been practised as part of legislative and executive elections, including at the national, provincial, and local levels (Sukmajati 2017). Often it involves local government traders, religious figures, organisational leaders, village leaders, prominent local entrepreneurs, and/or government agents, who affect the voting behaviour of their followers and constituents through their distribution of money (Fraenkel & Aspinall 2013: 132). However, the practice is very difficult to prove legally; indeed, before 2008, no money politics cases had been brought before the court (Indrayana 2017: 5).

In many regions, money politics remains prevalent in executive and legislative elections. Furthermore, the practice is becoming increasingly popular. It was particularly rampant during the 2017 simultaneous elections, when the election monitoring agency received more than 600 reports of money politics, spread amongst the 101 locales where direct elections were held (Sukmajati 2017). In North Maluku Province, 79 different reports were filed after simultaneous elections were held on December 9, 2015 (Chaniago 2016: 203–204). Similarly, in the Meranti Islands in 2015, the defeated candidate Tengku Mustafa (and his running mate Amyurlis) reported the winning candidate Irwan Nasir (and his running mate Said Hasyim) for the illegal practice of money politics, claiming massive, systematic, and structured electoral fraud (Halloriau.com 2015). This report as well as supporting evidence (including photographs and voice recordings) were forwarded to the constitutional court but rejected; the court found that the deviation of the vote count (2%) did not reach the threshold set by Article 158, Subsection 2, of Law No. 8 of 2015 junto Article 7, Subsections 2 and 3, of Regulation of the Constitutional Court of 2015 (Decision of the Constitutional Court 2016).

These cases of money politics have reinforced the fact that eliminating money politics in the Indonesian elections is not easy. As a result, general elections as a mechanism to elect political leaders have problems in terms of quality, which means that democracy also experiences the same quality problem. Two critical questions are the focus of this study. First, what is the real cause of money politics in general elections in Indonesia, especially in Meranti Islands Regency? Second, what is the proposed mechanism in solving money politics problems? In the second part, the proposed ideas are discussed in the form of building stakeholders' commitment and an anti-money politics village model in the Meranti Islands Regency.

METHOD

This qualitative study was conducted from July to August 2017, taking place in Meranti Islands Regency. The data were gathered through in-depth interviews with 22 informants about preventing money politics in the Meranti Islands Regency. A purposive sampling technique was employed for the selection of informants. The informants comprised elements of the Meranti Islands Regency government, political parties, youth organisations, the Meranti Regency Ulama Council, and Ketapang Indah Village, Tanjong

Kulim Village, and Bantar Village. In addition, data collection was carried out by studying documents or the literature. The data were analysed qualitatively following the procedure of thematic analysis.

THE EVOLUTION OF MONEY POLITICS

Money politics refers to the use of money by political parties, candidates, campaign teams, etc. to gain an advantage (Irawan et al. 2014). Money politics is directed explicitly to (registered) voters, ahead of the general election (Aspinall & Berenschot 2019: 157). However, it is difficult to define, as any definition must also contain the sociocultural elements in which it operates. Scholars have shown that money politics is more than the direct donation of cash or goods; it also encompasses a range of practices, as discussed below.

Edward Aspinall recognises several types of money politics and patronage, including: (1) vote buying, the disbursement of cash or products to voters in the days leading up to the election, with the tacit expectation that the recipients should reciprocate by voting for the grantor, (2) disbursement of gifts by private individuals, typically candidates, as well as the funding of religious/public activities during campaigns, (3) programmes and events such as the donation of cash and goods, (4) club goods, i.e., activities sponsored for the benefit of particular social groups rather than individuals, and (5) pork barrel projects, i.e., policy programmes targeted at specific geographical areas and funded with public money to gain the political and electoral support of local residents (Aspinal & Sukmajati 2015).

Similarly, Wahyudi Kumorotomo (2009) identifies various practices of money politics in direct elections, including: (1) direct money politics, in the form of cash payments from candidates' campaign team to potential constituents, (2) donations from incoming nominees to the backing party, and (3) "compulsory contributions" to political parties by cadres or prospective candidates who seek to contest an election. Often, the broad range of money and goods (from foodstuffs to cement) is difficult to tally; many candidates cannot calculate how much they have spent on donations, gifts, banners, etc. in addition to official membership registration fees, administrative fees, and witness reimbursements (Fitriyah 2012). Individual voters are given direct incentives: parcels full of cash or rice, sarongs, prayer clothes, or similar materials (Fraenkel & Aspinall 2013: 31). Similarly, religious organisations, spiritual groups, mosques, and schools are given products such as hijabs, sarongs, and prayer mats (sometimes paired with small cash gifts) (Aspinall & As'ad 2015: 181).

In his study "Money Politics in Regional Head Elections", Amazulian Rifai (2003) sought to explain the practice of money politics, with a particular focus on elections in Central Borneo, Kupang City, Semarang City, Lampung, and South Sumatra. He shows that money and goods are distributed in various ways. One common approach is commonly known as *serangan fajar* or "dawn attacks", in which money and/or goods is distributed on the morning of the election (Lukmajati 2016). Often such disbursements are provided shortly after morning prayers, and as such are also known as *serangan dhuha* or dhuha attacks, i.e., attacks conducted immediately after the morning prayers (Aminuddin & Attamimi 2019: 107; Muhtadi 2019a: 231).

These categories show that the practice of money politics varies widely in Indonesia. Candidates may provide cash or personal items such as wall clocks and umbrellas to voters, sponsor activities such as regency-level sports competitions, provide assistance to particular groups, such as by providing musical instruments to musical groups, or spearhead pork-barrel activities to provide broad-scale social assistance to supporters (Aspinall & Sukmajati 2015: 22–32). Anecdotal evidence from individual voters indicates that candidates and/or their campaign teams have provided them with goods such as cash, rice, sarongs, and prayer outfits (Fraenkel & Aspinall 2013: 31); voters are likely to support the candidates who give them the most food, clothes, and/or money (Nurdin 2016). The form of money politics may change over time; in the 2014 legislative elections, for instance, the provision of cash and basic needs was most prominent, while in the 2015 and 2017 elections candidates mostly implemented social programmes and distributed consumer resources to community groups (Sukmajati 2017).

Many studies have sought to understand the diverse elements of money politics, including "dawn attacks", individual and collective bribery, gift giving, project promises, and social events such as sports championships and concerts (Okhtariza 2019: 4; Nuryanti 2015: 134). Several studies, for instance, have investigated the practice of vote buying in Central Java's local elections. One study of the 2017 Kudus local election reveals that, due to complicated interactions between strategic and cultural considerations, vote buying was still practised even though the candidates were campaigning against an "empty box" (Hartati et al. 2019: 126).[1] According to Aspinall, the logic of vote-buying (in Indonesia) is similar to the logic of the market (Aspinall et al. 2017).

Similarly, investigating local legislative elections, Wahidah et al. (2017: 8) finds that vote buying is commonly practised by electoral candidates, who may provide money, goods, access to government programmes, and/or

funding assistance for physical development. Such assistance may be provided to individuals or groups, with common targets including religious institutions such as mosques, prayer groups, or religious assemblies (Aspinall & As'ad 2015: 182–183). The amount of money disbursed varies between regions, depending on the competitive situation and the local economy; however, there is a tendency for more money to be distributed in urban areas than in rural areas.

In responding to money politics, three tendencies are shown. First, voters may allow the money received by candidates to determine their electoral choice, with the vote being given to the candidate who provided the most money. Second, voters may make their choice without considering the amount of money received, and thus vote for whomever is closest to them, their relatives, and their counterparts. Third, voters may choose to support whomever last provided them with money (Sofianto 2015: 170). Voters who approve of vote buying tend to perceive themselves as indebted to the giver and thus are more likely to support the grantor (Nurdin 2016: 16).

Several studies have presented the idea of preventing the practice of money politics. Aspinall and Berenschot (2019: 348) argue that the character of economic development that does not depend on the state and a more diversified economy make civil society groups and economic groups more capable of criticising clientelistic practices, resulting in stronger social control. Berenschot (2018) argues that economics and the broader distribution of economic power can work to contain clientelistic practices. The spread of the economy can result in a more open public sphere and a more autonomous civil society capable of monitoring and disciplining the behaviour of the political-business elites. In this paper, we try to come up with slightly different ideas from Aspinall and Berenschot to preventing money politics in the Meranti Islands.

MONEY POLITICS IN MERANTI ISLANDS REGENCY

According to the informants, money politics is common in Meranti Islands Regency; in more isolated villages, voters may even explicitly request money from candidates' campaign teams. This concurs with Solihah's finding that local politics has been influenced significantly by the permissiveness of voters; despite money politics being normatively considered a behaviour to be shunned, it is accepted by voters as part of a culture of short-term pragmatism (Solihah 2016: 105). Money politics is routine in every election. It significantly

influenced elections during Indonesia's political reform (Indrayana 2017: 5) and was also pervasive during the simultaneous local elections of 2015 and 2017 (Sukmajati 2017).

Some voters do not perceive money politics as inappropriate, instead perceiving it as part of candidates' benevolence. This is reflected in the common framing of such money as aid, *infaq* (alms), and *shadaqah* (charity) in the present political context (Umam 2006). This shift from normative to moral frames has indirectly resulted in social protections of the act; when a community considers something common and acceptable, it cannot readily be changed by formal legal measures (Harianto et al. 2018). In Meranti Islands, the giving of money to candidates has become so commonplace that candidates must diligently visit supporters and distribute money; indeed, the disbursement of money and goods to voters is considered evidence that the candidate will contribute seriously after gaining office (Saputro and Zuhriyati 2018: 6).

In the Meranti Islands, voters prefer receiving cash over goods. This corresponds with the 2020 survey by the Election and Democracy Syndicate Agency, which found that communities in Sumatra, Java, and Borneo preferred cash politics; in the specific case of Sumatra, 64.26% of respondents espoused a preference for cash (Bayu 2020). In the Meranti Islands, the amount expected by voters ranges from Rp. 50,000 to Rp. 100,000, and higher figures may be reported. Such variation reflects common practices throughout the Indonesian Archipelago. Research conducted by Eka Vidya Putra in the West Sumatran city of Pariaman, for instance, found that candidates disbursed a range of amounts, including Rp. 20,000, Rp. 25,000, Rp. 50,000, and Rp. 75,000 (Putra 2017). In Central Java III Constituency, candidates distributed an average of Rp. 15,000 – Rp. 30,000 (USD 1.30 – USD 2.60) per voter, though amounts in excess of Rp. 50,000 were also reported. In East Java VIII Constituency, provincial and national candidates disbursed amounts of Rp. 20,000 to Rp. 30,000, while at the regency level amounts could vary between Rp. 5,000 to Rp. 10,000 (Aspinall et al. 2017: 10). In South Tapanuli, amounts of Rp. 30,000 to Rp. 100,000 were reported (Tans 2012: 40), while the Corruption Eradication Commission noted amounts that ranged from Rp. 20,000 to Rp. 50,000 (Rachman 2019).

In Meranti Islands Regency, some voters are willing to receive money from multiple candidates. These findings are consistent with Muhtadi's findings. In February 2018, 18% of voters were willing to accept money from multiple sources; this increased to 35% in March 2019, a month before the

election (Muhtadi 2019b: 69). Some voters were willing to receive money from different parties or candidates, with the number of such voters increasing as the election drew nearer (Muhtadi 2019a: 230).

Money Politics: Cause or Effect?

Interviews with the informants indicate that voters are likely to accept money politics owing to their poor economic condition. Data from the National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (TNP2K) indicates that—even as its poverty rate has declined—Meranti Islands Regency continues to have the highest poverty level in Riau Province. In 2010, more than 42.57% of the population lived below the poverty line; this decreased to 30.89% in 2016 (Indrawan 2018). This reflects the findings of Sholeh et al. (2018: 111–112), who show that poverty[2] is a major driver of money politics. Under the pressure of poverty, it is no surprise that individuals are willing to conduct such criminal acts, which normally target the poor. Voters insist on receiving money immediately, no matter its consequences or potential repercussions, as they fear that refusing money will disrupt their future activities and threaten their survival (Sholeh et al. 2018: 111–112). Money politics, thus, is influenced not only by its prevalence and establishment, but also by the socio-economic background of the region (Mas'oed and Savirani 2011).

Another factor contributing to the prevalence of money politics in the Meranti Islands is the lack of political education. Voters are not aware of the negative consequences of the practice, and these dangers do not concern all who recognise them. This is also consistent with Sholeh's proposal that the practice of money politics is linked to a limited understanding and knowledge of politics. Many people do not concern themselves with politics. They do not know the parties participating in elections, the prospective lawmakers, or the potential leaders, nor do they care about the results. For this reason, many voters only perceive elections as situations in which they can "sell" their votes, and vote buying as a natural part of the electoral process. Such a situation increases the prevalence of money politics (Sholeh et al. 2018: 112). Such findings have also been made by Rahmatiah in Gowa Regency, where limited political knowledge and economic difficulties have made it difficult to avoid money politics (Rahmatiah 2014: 389).

Additionally, the informants have indicated that electoral organising agencies and public figures had not strictly banned the practice of money politics. Vote buying by candidates has been perpetuated by the lack of supervision and enforcement of election laws, as well as these laws' own

shortcomings. One particularly prominent example is the abuse of regional budgets, particularly through social assistance programmes (Chaniago 2018: 40). Monitoring committees have limited commitment to preventing money politics. According to the Election Monitoring Agency (Bawaslu), in the 269 regions that held direct executive elections in 2015, there were 29 cases of money politics; Bawaslu was unable to confirm other suspected cases in the 2015 and 2017 elections (Sukmajati 2017). The conviction and/or firing of numerous members of the Honour Council for Election Administration, and the disciplining and/or firing of several Bawaslu commissioners, also indicate major problems with the honesty and professionalism of election organisers, which result in biased conduct that favours certain candidates over others (Bawaslu 2018a: 114).

The informants have also indicated that the lack of scrutiny and enforcement has exacerbated the practice of money politics in the Meranti Islands Regency. Asnawi, taking the 2014 legislative election in Serang Regency as an example, found that many reports of money politics should have been forwarded to Bawaslu but were not due to limited law enforcement and insufficient evidence. A lack of ethics, as indicated through the acceptance of bribes, the violation of laws, and partiality in oversight, has not been curtailed by election oversight committees, police officers, or prosecutors (Asnawi 2016: 770).

HOW TO STOP MONEY POLITICS?

There is some empirical evidence that the Electoral Management Body (EMB) abuses its authority to assist a politician in the general election. This case is often called "vote buying and selling". The Election Organiser Ethics Council [Dewan Kehormatan Penyelenggara Pemilu (DKPP)] has dismissed election organisers who were proven to be involved in the practice of buying and selling votes in the 2014 and 2019 elections. Regarding the implementation of the 2014 legislative elections, for example, DKPP dismissed the chairman and three members of the Regional Election Commission [Komisi Pemilihan Umum Daerah (KPUD)] of Empat Lawang Regency, because they received Rp. 150 million for changing the number of votes from 9,000 to 34,000 votes for a candidate running for the national legislature (DKPP 2014). Then, regarding the implementation of the 2019 legislative elections, the DKPP fired a member of the KPUD of Karawang Regency, Asep Saepudin Muklis, because he was proven to have received money from the election contestants

(DKPP 2019). The DKPP also dismissed the KPUD member of the West Southeast Maluku Regency, Yakop Hansen Talutu, because he was proven to have asked for and received money with the promise of adding votes for certain candidates (DKPP 2020). Furthermore, DKPP fired a member of the Prabumulih KPUD, Andry Swantana, because he allegedly received Rp. 350 million to change the votes of legislative candidates (DKPP 2021).

DKPP also noted many cases of irregularities in the implementation of local elections among election organisers. According to Prof. Dr Jimly Ashshiddiqy, the Chairman of the DKPP, organisers were significantly involved in the practice of electoral violations in 2016; this differed significantly from the 2015 elections, in which bribery was dominant. DKPP itself has expelled some 44 election organisers for breaking its Code of Ethics. Such violations have been linked to suspected corporate influences, and have been manifested through fraud, voter coercion, etc. (Rosyidin 2017). There has been substantial (yet unverified) evidence of election tabulation processes being misused, and seats being redistributed. Many politicians find it more cost-effective to participate at this point than to disburse cash or goods to individual constituents (Fraenkel & Aspinall 2013: 32).

Building Institutional Commitment

The involvement of members of the election administration in the case of buying and selling votes illustrates the complexities of election problems in Indonesia. Therefore, we need to find ways of how to solve this problem. The positive thing from this incident is that there have been strict penalties against members of the election organisers who are found guilty. This is evidence that members of the election administration are closely monitored. The implication of this policy is that it will build awareness and commitment among respective election stakeholders that the electoral process must be honest and clean and full of integrity. Although there are many challenges to make it happen, this awareness and commitment also need to be transmitted to voters.

It is not easy to build awareness and commitment amongst electors and voters. Saldi Isra (2017; 110) argues that many voters have contracted a "pragmatic illness", and approach elections with a purely pragmatic perspective. Some voters continue to see money as a blessing, as good luck; others believe that they must accept the money to be courteous, but do not feel obligated to express gratitude with a respectful smile (Winters 2016: 407–408). Such pragmatism contributed to the failure of campaigns that have sought

to teach voters to reject money politics and curb its spread, such as 2014's "Reject Money Politics, Reveal its Actors" (Sjafrina 2019: 50). Campaign teams and voters who have engaged in money politics claimed that they did not know such practices were prohibited by both positive and religious law. Education remains a significant factor influencing voters' behaviour; the more educated the voters, the more likely they are to oppose the practice of money politics (Aminuddin and Attamimi 2019: 105). Open and democratic voting remains the most powerful means of discouraging money politics.

However, cultivating such practices has never been simple (Indrayana 2017: 13). Despite the importance of socialising traditional democratic values through education, for many Indonesians these values conflict with the economic realities they face. This has significant implications for how the government and other anti-corruption actors address vote buying. Civic education and socialisation efforts may successfully alter citizens' normative evaluations of voting buying practices. However, they will not change the fundamental dilemma faced by poor voters, one which research has shown has encouraged people to accept and practice vote buying (Tawakkal et al. 2017: 325). In the literature, the generally accepted opinion is that political cronyism and corruption may explain higher poverty rates and lower levels of economic growth (Berenschot 2018: 1586).

The media must also play a role in preventing money politics, as it must offer an ethical framework that ensures that legislators and politicians are held accountable in a truthful, equitable, and democratic manner (Bawaslu 2018a: 129). It is necessary to create a culture of investigative journalism, one that is open to citizen journalists and aims to keep the media independent of politics. Infringements must be routinely disclosed, and practices of vote buying must be revealed. Only then can public knowledge of money politics and inequality be improved without causing undue drama (Falguera et al. 2014: 67). Vicente argues that this must be integrated into ongoing programmes to inform voters, thereby disrupting the practice of money politics and promoting the practice of good-faith voting, as only then can such programmes reduce poor voters' willingness to accept money from candidates (Vicente 2014: 24).

Local election commissions (KPUD) throughout Indonesia must also conduct political education programmes, especially amongst millennial voters, who account for 40% of the total voter turnout in Indonesia. In doing so, they should reflect upon the experiences of the General Election Commission [Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU)]. Before the 2019 election, for instance, KPU commenced several programmes, including KPU Goes to School and KPU Goes to Campus (Harnom et al. 2019: 6).

KPUD must collaborate synergistically with Bawaslu to prevent money politics. Election commissions must also work in conjunction with other actors, such as the national government, the national police, the local information office, religious organisations, local representatives, and community members, to collect sufficient statistics, disseminate knowledge, and enhance collaboration (Bawaslu 2018a: 125). The main step is to improve the selection of subdistrict supervisory committee members and election coordinators, thereby, ensuring that qualified and trustworthy people are appointed to these positions (Satrio 2014: 8).

Strict surveillance is necessary to keep candidates from using money politics and negative campaigns-practices that remain all too common in the current system (Bayo and Santoso 2019: 309). Such a view was also expressed by the informants. State watchdog organisations have various levels of authority, and may enforce social, criminal, and political sanctions. Political parties that breach the law may lose their public benefits or may be required to pay fines. Heavier penalties such as criminal charges, removal from office, denial of the right to run for elections, or even cancellation of political activities may be enforced (Speck 2013: 37). However, supervision and enforcement have been ineffective in preventing money politics in Indonesia (Indrayana 2017; Sukmajati 2017; Mas'oed and Savirani 2011); effective surveillance depends on the transparent involvement and interactions of diverse stakeholders, including regulators, civil society organisations, and media, all of which are lacking (Ohman 2013: 157–168). If they know that they may be imprisoned as a result of money politics, the informants are more likely to oppose the practice.

Enforcement of applicable election law can fail due to: 1) lack of will, 2) legal and regulatory barriers, 3) insufficient resources, and 4) weak enforcement by institutions (Office of Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance 2003). Supervision by Banwaslu and other officials remains inadequate, and many gaps can be exploited by candidates (Arianto 2018: 242). Reuter notes that candidates convicted of buying votes or coercing voters could be disqualified from standing for office (Reuter 2015: 17). Similarly, Winardi writes that several avenues are available for regulating the political use of money in elections, with the most prominent being the improvement of election laws and the practice of honest law enforcement (Winardi 2009: 162). However, many political actors and law enforcement agencies continue to neglect Indonesia's complex regulatory system, and inadequate implementation of these sophisticated regulatory systems reduces their effectiveness (Norris and van Es 2016: 23–24).

As such, to ensure the successful enforcement of applicable law, specific policies and resources for identifying violations and enforcing current legislation are necessary. To prevent money politics, there is a need to revamp election rules and improve the enforcement of applicable laws. At the same time, sanctioning must neither stifle political rivalry nor create an environment of terror and uncertainty. This requires established, qualified electoral management institutions, with complete independence in the administration of open and trustworthy elections (Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security 2012: 6).

Basically, Bawaslu is an official election supervisory agency functioning as the main pillar in overcoming the problems of violations that occur during elections in Indonesia. However, in practice, Bawaslu has not been able to optimally monitor the electoral violations, including money politics. The results of this study show that there are several obstacles faced by Bawaslu. They range from the problem of human resources, lack of cooperation among monitoring and law enforcement agencies due to limited authority in law enforcement related to elections, lack of regulations, to the availability of funds. The combination of these four issues shows that the Bawaslu has complicated problems.

Human resources for election supervisors in the regions require institutional empowerment in the form of training and recruitment processes by considering their expertise and good experiences related to elections. Commitment to tackle money politics also needs to be increased. Supervisors at the lowest level often do not understand the aspects of money politics violations and their impact on the quality of elections and local elections. Due to the problem of unsatisfactory human resources, election supervisors are often unable to identify and prove money politics according to legal facts.

Bawaslu requires human resources with legal experience, not to mention, individuals who are capable of recognising allegations and responding to suspected election offenses. It must also improve political parties' control over the management of campaign finances (Purbolaksono 2014: 18), as well as offer potent strategies to enable the strict scrutiny of candidates (and their teams) and prevent them from successfully using money for political purposes. Such strategies have previously been implemented, with some success in Panggungharjo Village, Bantul Regency (Bayo and Santoso 2019: 309).

Cooperation between monitoring and law enforcement agencies is necessary to prevent money politics. Bawaslu, in conjunction with the Indonesian Attorney General and the Indonesian National Police, has attempted to facilitate this process by signing a Memorandum of Understanding on

Integrated Law Enforcement. In general, this agreement has been very effective in promoting synergy between these organisations. Nonetheless, it must be accepted that this memorandum remains inadequate, particularly in the matters of interorganisational collaboration and law enforcement (Hidayat et al. 2018: 104).

In several cases, there have been violations of money politics reported and followed up by the Meranti Islands Regency Panwaslu and the integrated law enforcement agency (Gakkumdu). However, when followed up, it turned out that the data provided by the reporter did not meet the criteria of violation according to the law. Cooperation among institutions needs to be improved so it can educate and train the election supervisors, including those at the lowest level. The training is expected to enable the election supervisors to get the knowledge and understanding of how to collect evidence and compile it in an acceptable report, in accordance to the legal rules (Hanafi 2017).

> *Yang paling sulit dilakukan panwaslu dan masyarakat adalah membuktikan terjadinya politik uang. Sebab walaupun kejadian tersebut didepan mata, tetapi pembuktian secara hukum sangat sulit, karena berkaitan dengan barang bukti yang sah menurut aturan hukum. Disisi lain pelaku politik uang bukan lah orang yang resmi terdaftar dalam struktur tim sukses, melain pekerja lapangan diluar tim sukses, sehingga ketika diperiksa dapat berkilah bahwa uang yang diberikan bukan lah politik uang, tetapi merupakan biaya operasional tim sukses yang bekerja di lapangan. Ketika didiskusikan ditingkat gakkumdu, akhirnya dianggap sebagai pelanggaran administrative* (The most difficult thing for Panwaslu and the community in the 2015 Meranti Islands Regency Election is to prove the occurrence of money politics. Even if such an illegal practice occurred just in front of their eyes, legal evidence is very difficult as it is related to legal evidence according to the rule of law. On the other hand, money politics actors are not people officially registered in the success team structure. Instead, they often come from operators outside the official success team. When investigated, therefore, they can argue that the money given is not money politics. It is the operational cost for the success team working in the field. When discussed at the Gakkumdu level, it was finally considered only as an administrative violation) (Hanafi 2017).

At the regulatory level, one regulation that needs to be changed is the existence of a rule regarding the authority of election supervisors who seem only to accept reports and raise certain cases if there are reports from the public.

This rule is stipulated in Article 69, paragraph 2 of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 15 of 2011 concerning Election Organisers (Pejabat Pengelola Informasi dan Dokumentasi Bawaslu RI 2015). Bawaslu and its staff in the regions should be given the authority in-laws and regulations to supervise general elections. They are not supposed to only waiting for reports from the public or eligible participants. Therefore, the ideal regulation is to give the Bawaslu the authority to actively supervise elections.

The budget is essential because it involves operational and implementation issues in the field. So far, Bawaslu's budget has been so limited. Ideally, monitoring can be done at any time. However, in reality, supervision cannot be carried out all the time, because election supervisory officers at the sub-district and village levels have limitations in terms of operational costs. The fact is that the supervisory officers do not focus on carrying out their duties because they have other jobs. This is one of the negative impacts of a low budget. Therefore, if the budget for Panwaslu in the regions is sufficient, the effectiveness of Bawaslu in supervising elections, especially in dealing with money politics, will be increasing (Hanafi 2017).

It is therefore very important for all stakeholders to play a role in preventing money politics. As found by Sjafrina (2019: 51), responsibility must not only be borne by political parties, candidates, and campaign team, but also by cross-sectoral civil society organisations, election administrators, and the media. Each has its role to role in increasing public awareness of elections and electoral matters. When synergy is fully realised, and when election law is properly enforced, vote buying and money politics will be minimised.

Inventing a Village Model to Counter Money Politics

As shown above, Indonesians' attitudes towards vote buying can be multidimensional and nuanced. Helping politicians and government officials concentrate their limited resources on the most effective methods of educating voters and otherwise minimising the practice of vote buying requires a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic, nuanced nature of citizens' attitudes towards said practice (Tawakkal et al. 2017: 326)

As elsewhere,[3] the government should comprehensively work towards improving voters' welfare at the village level. In the Meranti Islands Regency, where the poor are dispersed in villages, they are especially vulnerable to money politics at the individual level. As such, the informants have argued that improved welfare would protect them from money politics. Data shows

that Meranti Islands Regency is the poorest in Riau Province (Anggrahita et al. 2018: 200; Central Bureau of Statistics, Meranti Islands Regency 2019: 51–54). Since people have limited employment and income, they are insecure and unstable, and thus willing to accept money from any source (Chulu 2012: 2). Adojutelegan (2018: 48), citing Jensen and Justesen (2014), notes that economic growth may beneficially affect electoral process, eventually alleviating poverty and reducing vote buying.[4] Educating voters about the deleterious effects of vote buying would further reduce its practice.

To deal with the case of money politics in the Meranti Islands Regency, we put forward the idea of the need to increase the community involvement at the village level. The Panwaslu informants have indicated that involving communities in monitoring could prevent the use of money for political purposes, as money politics is often made possible by the lack of scrutiny at the lower level. Actively involving the community in reporting violations to Panwaslu, thereby supplementing the human resources in the field, would enable the monitors to optimise election supervision (Hafidz 2019: 13). This would also minimise opportunities for bribery, vote buying, coercion, and abuse (Hamid 2014).

One potential means of involving communities is creating anti-money politics villages. Such a model has been employed successfully elsewhere; the creation of such villages in Yogyakarta by Bawaslu was able to transform rural communities' views and increase communities' political knowledge and understanding. Residents, once shackled by the practice of money politics, became less likely to accept it; some villages saw its practice reduce, while others saw it eliminated entirely. This example shows that, even with limited human capital, it is possible to improve communities' understanding and political awareness, to reduce the practice of money politics, and to introduce a clean democracy (Marsudi and Sunarso 2019: 120).

The community in Meranti Regency, especially at the village level, has religious values, and noble universal values such as honesty, fairness, and responsibility. These values are also the values that become the basic principles of holding general elections in Indonesia. In the case of the Meranti Islands Regency, an anti-money politics village that can be developed is a religious village. Other anti-money politics villages in Indonesia may vary according to the character of the villages. Then, social sanctions can be created and enforced in case of money politics.

The emphasis at the village level is not without reason. The first reason is that general elections and local elections are carried out at the village level. In addition to the general election, there is also the election of a village head at the village level. Therefore, there are many voters there who play

an important role in influencing the general election results. Second, money politics is very common at the village level because the political culture of the village community during the general election and local elections has not been oriented to the candidate programme. Almost every time, there is a process of selecting a leader. The process of selecting a leader is always related to the widespread practice of money politics. The existence of an anti-money politics village will affect the candidates not trying to influence voters with the lure of money in the anti-money politics village.

Involving clerics at the village level could also prevent the practice of money politics. The informants have also indicated that many voters did not know that money politics is prohibited by Islam, and that its perpetrators are faced with eternal damnation; they expressed the view that, should voters know, many would reject money politics. Such religious leaders, many of whom come from middle-class families with a history of producing clerics who maintain Islamic orthodoxy, must thus elucidate Islamic codes of behaviour. This can be realised not only through sermons, but also through religious boarding schools (Nasir 2015: 30). However, in the Meranti Islands, the clergy are still being co-edified by other communities.

Markoni (2014), based on a study in Palembang City, finds that religious figures remain influential as references to prospective voters. Clerics serve not only as religious authorities, but as leaders. They not only guide Muslims in dealing with the intricacies of religious matters, but also in addressing everyday issues and making everyday choices. They use their charismatic personalities to draws followers, to whom they can disseminate important information and perspectives (Alfida 2015: 201). Village clerics, thus, are able to educate their followers about the illegitimacy of money politics.

At the national level, the Indonesian Assembly of Ulamas [Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI)] has already issued a fatwa about money politics.[5] Nonetheless, it is poorly socialised. According to a review of the literature on the practice of money politics, or *risywah* (bribery), in Islamic law, the practice is akin to "consum[ing] one another's wealth unjustly", as stated in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 188. Such a perspective is reaffirmed by the MUI fatwa. However, neither sanctions nor their implementation is specified by the Qur'an or the hadiths (the collected words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad). Sanctions are thus determined by the government and by judges (Mokodompis et al. 2018: 135).

People say that if they are reminded that money politics is a forbidden act because it is against Islam, they will not accept money from anyone (candidate or campaign team) on the polling day (Jang 2017). The dilemma

here is that some ulama are affiliated with certain political parties or candidates in the general election who do not necessarily want to carry out anti-money politics propaganda. However, many scholars are neutral. The Indonesian Ulema Council can be the reference scholars at the district/city level and in sub-districts and villages. In the case of Meranti Regency, many ulama were willing to preach about rejecting money politics. The chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council of Meranti Regency has even committed to the da'wah programme without being paid. According to him, it is part of worship and charity to Allah SWT (Mustafa 2017).

The election supervisory body can see this opportunity for a programme to prevent money politics with the ulama. This programme needs to be made nationally where the Bawaslu provides guidelines that need to be conveyed by the ulama to reject money politics. Training also needs to be conducted to enhance their understanding of money politics in terms of strengthening the quality of elections. On the other hand, the central Indonesian Ulema Council can play a role in strengthening this understanding in the guidebooks and guidelines made by the central Indonesian Ulema Council and the Bawaslu for the regional ulama. The budget for the programme involving the Indonesian Ulema Council certainly needs to be included in the Bawaslu budget so it can be run as expected. This budget includes for the Election Supervisory Agency in the regions, especially for training programmes. In addition, billboards can also be distributed to promote the dangers of money politics and punishments for the perpetrators.

There are several advantages of anti-money politics calls from the ulama compared to campaigns made by schools, posters, and general appeals. First, the ulama can reach out to all corners of the region, including villages and many remote areas. Second, the ulama are very well listened by the community, especially by their congregations. Third, scholars use religious arguments which are values embedded in their ummah, especially Muslims.

In the past few years, Bawaslu has fostered the participation of local religious figures in socialising participatory control. It has produced a series of reference books to help religious functionaries convey institutional content, with the hope that they will inform the public about the dangers of money politics (Bawaslu 2018b: 4). For Islamic leaders, it has produced a book titled *Tausiyah Pemilu Berkah* (On Blessed Elections). This book informs readers that money politics does not coincide with dominant religious and legal values, and that its perpetrators can be sanctioned (Bawaslu 2018b).

In educating voters about the dangers of money politics, the mass media, online media, and social media play an important role. They also offer an opportunity to track the practice of money politics (Falguera et al. 2014). Learning from previous campaigns, civil society groups and media outlets have worked in tandem to develop new, more creative approaches to monitoring electoral campaigns. Indonesians are amongst the world's most active social media users, and civil society groups have thus integrated such media into monitoring applications and websites (Hamid 2014: 47).

As discussed above, money politics is induced by many factors, including a lack of knowledge, a complacency with common practice, and socio-economic pressure. In Islamic law, money politics is more like *risywah* (bribery) than *sedakah* or *zakat* (as it has often been framed by perpetrators), as it involves the direct or indirect gifting of money or goods in order to influence voters' choices in presidential, national, and legislative elections (Umar 2015: 130). However, to create anti-money politics villages, these concepts must be realised down to the village level.

Using cultural, educational, and mass media organisations, political education must be able to teach voters that "vote buying is a bad and unethical activity" (Nurdin 2016: 17). The news media have a role to play, as they can instil voters with a consciousness of their primary obligations and an understanding of the importance of supporting candidates with integrity. As in the case of Nigeria, where the media promotes candidates who use their resources to weaken democratic processes and good governance practices, money politics will continue to flourish (Ogbette et al. 2019: 16).

CONCLUSION

Money politics is a problem that always arises in general elections in Indonesia. This study finds that there are several main reasons why money politics persist. In the case of the Meranti Islands Regency, several themes have been identified: a high poverty rate, a lack of public understanding of money politics and its negative impacts, a lack of supervision or monitoring, and a weak justice system. The four factors are intertwined in facilitating and encouraging the practices of money politics during the elections.

The practice of money politics, which has become embedded in Indonesian electoral culture, can be reduced if various stakeholders commit to minimising its triggering factors. Collaborative efforts must be undertaken at all levels, from the state to the village. Public participation in oversight must be

increased, and laws must be expressly enforced to deter potential perpetrators. However, positive endeavours such as anti-money politics villages cannot be effective if they focus solely on monitoring and enforcement. Research shows that government programmes to eradicate poverty and improve community welfare at the village level are key to breaking the chains of money politics. In addition, it is necessary for local governments, regional election commissions, general election committees, political parties, clerics, and media organisations to conduct political education and teach voters to reject money politics.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

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1 In these so-called "empty box" elections, candidates contest elections against an empty ballot box, with the winner being determined based on the number of votes received. The party that receives the most votes is designated the winner (Mayangsari and Permana 2019; Nur and Fitriyah 2018). In Makassar in 2015, the prospective candidates were defeated by an empty box (Romli 2018: 148–152).

2 Poverty is defined here as the inability to fulfil basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, education, and healthcare. Poverty is caused by the scarcity of resources and difficulty accessing education and employment (Sholeh et al. 2018: 111–112).

3 In Nigeria, for example, it has been argued that reducing poverty to the lowest minimum can enable the electorate to make independent political decisions and vote for honest candidates rather than corrupt politicians who waste money (Ogbette et al. 2019: 16). Similarly, in Zambia and many other African countries, comprehensive government programmes are required to reduce poverty and analphabetism in shanty compounds, thereby enabling democracy to flourish (Chulu 2012: 45–46).

4 It is commonly argued that the lower classes and the vulnerable middle classes are most vulnerable to money politics (Aminuddin and Attamimi 2019). However, Berenschot notes some tendencies that go against these prevailing theories. For example, clientelism is considered to be less severe in rural, poverty-prone Java, while in relatively affluent provincial capitals and the state, clientelism tends to strengthen (Berenschot 2018: 1563).

5 In Indonesian society, MUI has served as an educator and a guide to Islamic teachings, using a range of instruments to shape society and its practices. In this capacity, MUI has relied primarily on two forms of media i.e., fatwa discourses and non-fatwa discourses. The former is the most prominent in Indonesian society, as through the fatwas passed by the ulama, it is possible to ascertain what is prohibited and what is permitted. Fatwas provide tangible evidence of religious authorities' power to guide citizens (As'ad 2010: 1–2).

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