



Mandar-Culture-Based Political Education in Preventing Money Politics in the 2024 Election in Majene Regency

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ABSTRACT

Low public participation in monitoring election violations will affect elections with integrity and dignity. The practice of money politics will create corruption and harm society. This research discusses the political education of the Mandar Tribe community in preventing the practice of money politics in the 2024 elections. This research uses a descriptive qualitative research method by collecting primary data through a structured questionnaire-based survey. The data collection technique uses nonprobability sampling, namely purposive sampling which is used to select respondents from the community, the KPU and Bawaslu of Majene Regency, election participants and the Majene Regency government. The research results show that society's vulnerability to money politics is quite high, so prevention is needed through political education by election management institutions, the government and political parties. The level of community political participation is quite good through comprehensive strategic approaches such as outreach from election organizers through My Ads and outreach to prevent money politics involving figures in the community with Mandar political, legal and cultural education. The conclusion of this research is that the practice of money politics can be prevented through collaborative movements involving various stakeholders, including election organizers, government, political parties and community groups.



INTRODUCTION

Elections are one of the essential components in the implementation of democracy in a country. Through elections, citizens have the opportunity to choose their representatives who will make important decisions at the government level. Elections serve as the foundation of a democratic system, where active public participation is crucial to ensuring the success of the process. Elections are not merely a mechanism for selecting leaders but also a form of political expression and an indicator of a nation's democratic health. In the context of elections, public participation becomes a vital element as it directly affects the success of the electoral process. High voter turnout can enhance the legitimacy of the elected government. Conversely, low participation rates can jeopardize political stability and the credibility of the system.

The 2024 election is a democratic festivity distinct from the 2019 election. This is due to the presence of three presidential and vice-presidential candidate pairs and 24 political parties in the 2024 election. It is identified as a pivotal moment in Indonesia's democratic journey, which has spanned 25 years since the Reform era. The success of the 2024 election requires support and active participation from various segments of society. This election is viewed as the best opportunity for the public to entrust their political aspirations to their representatives peacefully and serves as a political evaluation moment to determine whether the elected candidates can fulfill their mandate according to the people's expectations.

The emergence of public distrust in political actors during elections is caused by several factors, such as rampant political corruption by elected politicians and the lack of positive post-election impacts on public welfare. The increasing corruption cases have led to public apathy, resulting in movements advocating for abstention from voting, often referred to as the "white group" or *golput*. This group campaigns against voting in elections due to dissatisfaction with the results. However, abstention is not a viable solution as it distances the public from the possibility of electing leaders with integrity. Without integrity, leadership lacks the decisiveness to combat corruption and fairness in governing the country (ACLC, 2023).

In reality, political corruption frequently makes headlines in mass media, especially concerning vote-buying. The routine reporting of political actors involved in vote-buying often angers the public, leading some scholars to label vote-buying as the "mother of corruption" worldwide (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2015). The consequences of vote-buying result in leadership and governance that prioritize personal and group interests over public welfare. The high costs associated with vote-buying inflate election expenses, as candidates bear the burden of bribing election organizers and potential voters. This practice stems from a mindset of trading financial investments for votes, with the intent of recouping these investments post-election while neglecting public interests in policymaking.

Political corruption contradicts morality, law, and social norms, as it involves the misuse of authority for financial gain by individuals, groups, or other parties. Such acts, whether material or immaterial, are deemed harmful politically, legally, economically, and socially. Currently, there are at least two prevalent forms of political corruption. First, government officials use their authority to benefit certain parties, including private entities, state officials, and other dominant groups controlling Indonesia's natural resources. A common practice involves political promises to facilitate projects for financial backers in exchange for their support in securing political office. Second, corruption involves public funds used to secure and strengthen power. Politicians often offer various forms of support, including political patronage, to their financial backers in return for political benefits, which are later compensated with incentives or business facilitation for their patrons (Abdussamad, Faralita, & Sulastri, 2023).

Essentially, elections are a form of public participation in selecting individuals deemed suitable to hold and wield power for a specified period. As a medium of public trust, sovereignty in the electoral process lies with the people, making them the primary actors in regulating those in power. Consequently, the ruling authority only holds a portion of sovereignty, while full sovereignty remains with the people.

Currently, vote-buying is widespread during election periods, with 40% of Indonesians admitting to receiving money from political actors during the 2019 election, and 37% acknowledging they would reconsider



voting for those who offered them money. This phenomenon was illustrated in a survey by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) (Purnamasari & Rastika, 2019).

Vote-buying occurs in many regions, including Majene Regency in West Sulawesi Province. The majority of Majene's population comprises the Mandar ethnic group, who, due to low political education, are easily tempted by vote-buying during the 2024 political competition. In a recent case, an honorary staff member in Majene Regency's local government was caught in a money politics operation. During a raid on Monday, February 12, 2024, during the quiet period of the 2024 election, evidence was found, including 30 envelopes containing IDR 350,000 each, sample ballots favoring certain politicians, and a voter list (Pay, 2024).

This situation contradicts Indonesia's legal, social, ethical, and political cultural systems, including the Mandar culture predominant in Majene. Within Mandar cultural values, political corruption manifesting as vote-buying opposes the principles of *angga*, *siri*, and *lokko*. Vote-buying is perceived as incompatible with the Mandar culture, which upholds values such as humility, self-respect, honesty, solidarity, and human dignity. Accepting money illegitimately during an election—a form of public participation—is considered shameful within the Mandar cultural system. Therefore, it is essential to revive Mandar political culture rooted in *angga*, *siri*, and *lokko* as a political education strategy for Mandar society in Majene to address the negative impacts of vote-buying during the 2024 election.

The empirical data above indicate that Mandar-based political education is increasingly eroded by pragmatism, contributing to the widespread practice of vote-buying in the 2024 election. This Mandar-based political education is an intriguing subject for study and research to better identify the challenges, opportunities, and strategies to enhance Mandar-based political education in addressing vote-buying and supporting the success of the 2024 election in Majene Regency.

METHOD

This research will explore political education as a means to prevent vote-buying practices in Majene Regency during the 2024 elections, with a focus on its relationship to Mandar culture. Based on the core issues, this study employs a descriptive research method and a qualitative approach. According to Moleong (2018), qualitative research examines contexts comprehensively, fosters interaction among participants, and collects data directly, relying on descriptive research data. This approach enables the generation of narrative data, both written and verbal, derived from observed behaviors among participants.

In the descriptive method, the researcher collects primary data through structured surveys using questionnaires. The data collection technique employs nonprobability sampling, specifically purposive sampling, which is used to select respondents relevant to the research focus and core issues. The research subjects are individuals deemed knowledgeable and relevant to the research topic, selected intentionally to obtain data that serves as a basis for theoretical reflection. The research informants include representatives from the General Election Commission (*KPU*), the Election Supervisory Body (*Bawaslu*), community leaders, and voters.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Political education is a learning process aimed at enhancing individuals' understanding of the political system, their citizenship rights and responsibilities, and equipping them with the necessary skills to actively participate in political life. Through political education, individuals can comprehend the political system, decision-making processes, citizens' rights and responsibilities, and develop critical and participatory attitudes towards social and political issues (Aulia & Dewi, 2022). Political education involves introducing political concepts, understanding political structures, decision-making mechanisms, and training in political participation skills (Somantri & Dewi, 2021). It also plays a crucial role in equipping individuals and improving their political participation skills (Rahman A., 2018). Furthermore, political education aims to foster critical and participatory attitudes toward social and political issues (Wekke & Mukhtar, 2019).



Preventing vote-buying can begin with early detection within the community, both individually and collectively, by leveraging existing social norms and institutions (Alam, 2018). People are encouraged to understand the long-term negative impacts of vote-buying. While preventive political education is challenging, it represents the most effective way to address the vulnerabilities to vote-buying that frequently occur during electoral moments. Preventive measures are necessary to avoid moral and legal damage caused by irresponsible attempts to secure votes through unethical practices.

Political culture refers to the beliefs, customs, collective attitudes, and shared ideals that exist and thrive within a society. These elements manifest in a system that encompasses the social, political, and economic dimensions of the community and are eventually adopted by the state. Broadly speaking, four types of political culture have developed around the world. First, democratic culture, where groups in society are driven by tolerance and mutual respect, even toward political opponents or anti-democratic groups. Second, authoritarian political culture, in which state leaders believe that progress can only be achieved by rejecting democracy in their political system. Leaders in authoritarian regimes tend to oppress minorities and disregard their rights under the pretext of maintaining national security and socio-political stability. Third, consensual and conflictual culture, where the populace agrees on the basic political beliefs and the electoral system of a country. Fourth, dynamic and evolving political cultures, such as Islamism, Marxism, and capitalism, which continue to adapt and develop across nations (Hiranatasya, 2024).

Numerous fundamental factors play a vital role in shaping a country's political culture, including history, religion, ethnicity, social stratification, and others. This is also evident in the political culture of the Mandar ethnic group, which is deeply influenced by spiritual beliefs prevalent in their society, forming fundamental principles in their way of life. The Mandar people uphold values that initially develop individually, then evolve into familial values, and eventually become a collective or societal consensus. These fundamental values align with the principles of substantive democracy, particularly freedom and the recognition of human rights, which are absolute and inviolable.

The political culture of the Mandar people is rooted in teachings that have evolved within their society, commonly referred to as the three elements: *angga*, *siri*, and *lokko*. In practice, *siri* and *lokko* are dominant and serve as behavioral guidelines for the Mandar community. *Angga* represents the values of good and bad, right and wrong, which bind the community. Over time, the concept of *angga* has been integrated into legal culture, becoming customary law for the Mandar people. Meanwhile, *siri* and *lokko* symbolize care and social teachings that restrict the Mandar people from violating established consensus. These teachings emphasize core values such as honesty in words and actions, fostering solidarity and tolerance with those who differ from the Mandar, and feeling ashamed when committing wrongdoings. For the Mandar, these teachings are strictly upheld to prevent excessive behavior within the community (Rahman & Mas'ud, 2015). In simple terms, *siri* represents humanistic values, while *lokko* symbolizes a sense of honor that must be defended in Mandar traditions.

In line with democratic principles, democratic traditions have existed and developed among the Mandar people since the era of the Balanipa Kingdom. The Mandar community practiced representative politics through a system known as *Appe Banua Kayyang*, where representatives of the people discussed and agreed upon policies with the King of Balanipa. This system also ensured close oversight by the representatives, with kings being chosen through a rigorous electoral process that included competence assessments, thereby avoiding dynastic political systems.

Regarding the people's rights, the King of Balanipa fully recognized and supported equality within the community, regardless of gender, while positioning the king as a servant and caretaker of the people. This care was symbolized by the absence of a royal palace, allowing the king and the people to interact freely without barriers. Similarities with democracy were also evident in the division of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. This highlights how democratic values were deeply rooted in the traditions of the Balanipa Kingdom, prioritizing transparency and respect for individual rights.

In the traditions of the Mandar people, there is a concept of honor that represents the highest dignity of an individual, which must be carefully preserved to maintain trust within the community. Although social stratification exists, it arises from differences in individual roles and functions within the community, rooted in



the spirit of independence and the desire to protect one's group from threats. The freedom to express opinions and participate actively in society is evident in various Mandar cultural practices, such as sikalulu (mutual cooperation) and sirumung karayya (deliberation).

Money politics is a widespread practice in society, involving the provision of money or goods as a bribe to voters in exchange for their votes (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2015). This practice often violates voters' rights, subtly coercing them to exchange their votes through transactional schemes involving money or goods during election periods. Such transactions, typically occurring in specific phases of political contests, constitute campaign violations (Aspinall & Hicken, *Guns for Hire and Enduring Machines: Clientelism Beyond Parties in Indonesia and the Philippines*, *Journal of Democratization*, 27(1): 137–156, 2019). These actions also carry legal implications, especially as they frequently involve sympathizers, party cadres, and political party officials. Through the distribution of goods and services, voters are persuaded sympathetically to cast their votes for those offering bribes.

Money politics fosters clientelism and patronage systems. Clientelism is an individual-based exchange process where power is traded for certain obligations, resulting in a corrupt power structure detrimental to society (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). Patronage, on the other hand, involves providing access to political and economic power to financiers by those in authority, creating agreements that benefit them while violating the rights and sovereignty of the people. Aspinall describes patronage as a mechanism in which political actors use economic resources to distribute benefits to voters in exchange for electoral support. This practice encourages corrupt governance and inflates political costs (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2015).

Consequently, there has been growing discourse on the need for political education to protect communities from the influence of money politics. Bribery practices in politics are often used as transactional commitments to win voters' hearts. Political actors offer, promise, and bribe citizens to secure their votes, thereby gaining political positions. These bribes commonly take the form of cash or basic goods, especially during campaign periods or shortly before election day. Such actions violate campaign regulations, as they commodify voters' voices and participation in exchange for material rewards.

Money politics is prevalent in emerging democracies, including Indonesia. The exchange of money is often perceived as a norm, viewed as a reward for voters supporting political actors. On the other hand, the lack of political education limits public understanding of money politics, leading to its normalization in political events. Furthermore, legal regulations on money politics remain lenient, targeting only candidates and officially registered campaign teams. This legal loophole has led to the emergence of "ghost teams" operating unofficially to distribute bribes, thereby evading proportional penalties.

Meanwhile, money politics is often supported by the culture that exists within society, where political actors involved in money politics are typically individuals with close relationships to the community, creating a sense of discomfort or reluctance to reject the assistance offered. The mentality of shame disappears, especially when the recipients of money politics are generally from lower to middle-income groups. These behaviors lead to the emergence of reciprocal practices that benefit both parties, as explained by Aspinall & Berenschot, where the buying and selling of votes occurs, resulting in the exchange of votes from voters for rewards in the form of money or goods from political actors (Aspinall & Berenschot, *Democracy for Sale: Pemilu, Klientelisme, and Negara di Indonesia*, 2019). The desire to gain political support through money politics leads to widespread corruption and high political costs.

To prevent money politics, which is prevalent in Indonesia, including in Majene, various parties have implemented political education strategies. One such effort is by the General Election Supervisory Agency of Majene (Bawaslu), which maximizes the use of MyAds to reach the public. The choice of MyAds is based on the socio-cultural conditions of the Majene community, where it is expected to ensure equal access to election information, understanding of electoral regulations, and prevention of potential election violations, even in remote areas. The challenge of limited internet access is addressed by using MyAds services from Telkomsel as an alternative to amplify outreach.

Socialization through social media and direct engagement with the community are also used to increase political participation in Majene for the 2024 elections. "In areas where many parts of West Sulawesi are still



not covered by internet networks, broadcasting via SMS through MyAds from Telkomsel becomes an effective method to expand the reach of socialization regarding election violations. Additionally, we also maximize various approaches such as social media outreach and meeting directly with the community. We cannot ignore certain areas that also need election information, which we cannot reach directly. Therefore, MyAds is one of the information services we can maximize" (Interview with Bawaslu Majene Chairperson, Syofyan Ali, Majene, July 1, 2024).

Through MyAds, election socialization is carried out, including urging the public to avoid money politics practices, as it leads to the emergence of a corrupt culture, violates the law, and is ethically wrong in political terms. Meanwhile, in addressing money politics, Munawir Ridwan, Chairperson of the Majene Election Commission (KPU), explained that money politics results in an increase in political participation that is superficial, as the increase in votes is not accompanied by adherence to democratic electoral rules and attempts to violate the law by those involved in money politics practices. Therefore, the Majene KPU staff continuously urges the public during every election socialization event to actively exercise their voting rights in a democratic manner.

Various forms and practices of election violations are expected to be avoided so as not to harm the future of democracy, the continuity of daily life in society, and to prevent political turmoil that could lead to criminal penalties and imprisonment for those proven to violate the law during the 2024 elections. "When conducting socialization in the community, we always encourage people to actively exercise their voting rights and avoid various forms of election violations, including money politics. We must not let the money and basic goods received jeopardize the nation's future and produce corrupt politicians. Moreover, money politics is clearly detrimental and does not educate the public, so there is a need for strong political education. We certainly do not want superficial participation that harms the quality of democracy. We should not allow an increase in voter participation to be achieved through 'dirty' means. The Mandar cultural value of shame must be revived to prevent money politics, along with strengthening legal regulations and good political education" (Interview with the Chairperson of Majene's Election Commission, Munawir Ridwan, Majene, July 1, 2024).

Meanwhile, the National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol) has been quite active in conducting political education and socialization in Majene, particularly for young voters who make up the majority. The voters are reminded to fulfill their rights and duties as citizens by utilizing their voting rights in the 2024 elections as an effort to increase political participation and steer clear of campaign practices that violate the law, political systems, and the social culture of society. On several occasions, as stated by the Head of Kesbangpol Majene, Irwansyah Burhanuddin, the people of Majene, who are mostly Mandar, have a social and cultural system that instills a sense of shame for engaging in bad actions in society, including the practice of money politics.

In various political education opportunities, it is emphasized that building political awareness through the formation of critical thinking and democratic political participation is essential in exercising political rights (Wekke & Mukhtar, 2019). "The Mandar people know *angga*, *siri*, and *lokko*, which are part of a culture of honesty and shame. If money politics arises from anyone and is accepted and exchanged for votes during elections, that shows a lack of shame and honesty. Therefore, during every socialization and political education session, I always encourage people to use their voting rights properly, in the right way. Do not be tempted by money politics, which tarnishes personal integrity, threatens democracy, and jeopardizes the nation's future. We want democracy that is honest, shameful of corruption, transparent, and successfully achieved through good means" (Interview with the Head of Kesbangpol Majene, Irwansyah Burhanuddin, Majene, July 2, 2024).

Meanwhile, the Chairperson of the Golkar Party in Majene, Lukman, explained that the commitment to avoid money politics can be upheld by all parties, including political party cadres. He has always invited and urged party cadres, including those from Golkar, to make use of democracy in a legitimate, legal, and constitutional way to avoid breaking the law. Concerning money politics, it is very dangerous, similar to abstention (*golput*), as it harms the existence of democracy in Indonesia, including in Majene. Therefore, a political approach through political education, strengthening legal regulations to provide a deterrent effect on money politics actors, and the optimization of local customs as a filter for various negative impacts are necessary. "I always remind political party cadres, including those in Golkar, to avoid money politics, as it damages the mentality of



society and constitutes an election violation. To prevent money politics, the solution lies in good political education as an early prevention effort and educating the public about the harmful effects of money politics. Mere appeals are not enough; there must also be legal regulations that are continuously strengthened to keep up with current conditions and developments. Equally important is the presence of values such as *angga*, which serves as a standard for good and bad actions in society, and even becomes customary law. These three pillars must be maximized and continuously educated so that the public understands and is aware of the dangers of money politics" (Interview with the Chairperson of Golkar Majene, Lukman, Majene, July 3, 2024).

Meanwhile, a Mandar community leader, Darmansyah, explained that the political culture of the Mandar people in Majene is actually very democratic, making them reject and avoid money politics. However, many factors have changed this habit, such as the influence of foreign cultures and other ethnic groups entering Majene, which has affected the socio-cultural patterns of the people of Majene, including the Mandar ethnic group itself. In fact, in their thinking, speech, and actions, the Mandar people are guided by their culture, for example, there are fundamental values in the Mandar social life, such as *angga*, *siri*, and *lokko*. *Angga* defines what is permissible and impermissible in society, and eventually becomes customary law. Meanwhile, *siri* and *lokko* generate a culture of shame and honesty, where a person feels ashamed if they are dishonest or engage in harmful actions towards themselves or others.

"Those who violate *angga* can be subjected to customary law, including those who commit criminal acts like engaging in money politics. This is a form of social punishment, as it falls under customary law. Meanwhile, those involved in money politics bring shame to themselves and society, which is part of *siri*. If they are sentenced to prison for proven wrongdoing, it is like being subjected to *lokko*, bringing shame to the extended family. Therefore, I emphasize that the Mandar people in Majene, socially and culturally, should avoid the practice of money politics" (Interview with Mandar Community Leader, Darmansyah, Majene, July 4, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Elections are an essential part of the democratic life in Indonesia, requiring public participation to ensure the successful circulation of political leadership and the selection of political actors who will hold power in various governmental and executive institutions. In elections, efforts to attract voter sympathy and preferences often involve various methods, including political corruption manifested in the form of money politics. This electoral crime arises due to various factors, including economic conditions, social-cultural systems, and limited political education.

To prevent money politics in the 2024 elections in Majene, a variety of strategies are necessary, including strengthening legal regulations, political education, and cultural approaches. Culturally-based political education aimed at preventing money politics will succeed through collaborative movements involving various stakeholders, including election organizers, the government, political parties, and community groups. The cultural approach utilizes the values rooted in Mandar culture, such as *angga*, *siri*, and *lokko*, which encourage feelings of shame when making mistakes and guilt when being dishonest in life. Through this cultural approach to political education, it is hoped that a collective awareness will emerge within the community to avoid various forms of electoral violations, including money politics, thus fostering democratic political leadership. Political education can be carried out by various groups, especially community leaders, who can set an example for their communities to prevent money politics within the Mandar ethnic group.

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