
An Analysis of the Phenomenon of Money Politics from a Political Communication Perspective in the 2024 Legislative Elections in Bandung City

Syauqi*, Neni Yulianita

Universitas Islam Bandung, Indonesia

Email: syauqi.123syauqi@gmail.com*, neni.yulianita@unisba.ac.id

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the persistent practice of money politics in the 2024 Legislative Election (Pileg) in Bandung City. Despite the implementation of regulations, such practices continue to occur with various patterns and strategies. The study aims to examine the process of money politics, the forms in which it is carried out, and the role of political communication in sustaining money politics during the 2024 Legislative Election in Bandung City. The research employed a qualitative case study approach within a constructivist paradigm. Data were collected through interviews, participant observation, and literature review. The findings reveal: (1) the process of money politics occurs through stages of voter mapping and targeting, distribution of money/goods during campaigns, and channeling through intermediaries; (2) money politics is carried out using money/goods due to its effectiveness and alignment with transactional political culture, through the construction of social facilities for image-building and long-term strategies, as well as social activities that utilize religious values and foster voter attachment; (3) political communication plays a role in shaping public opinion, reducing negative perceptions, and creating a positive image of candidates. Research on the phenomenon of money politics in the 2024 legislative elections in Bandung City shows that the practice of money politics is planned through voter mapping, incentive distribution, and channeling through intermediaries, with political communication that frames a narrative of concern and forms a positive image of the candidate to reduce public moral resistance.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of money politics in the 2024 Legislative Election (Pileg) in the city of Bandung, especially through *the mode of dawn attacks*, is still rampant even though regulations have been enacted (Dirgantara & Al-Fatih, 2026). This practice reflects weak law enforcement and low political awareness of the community, and has the potential to hurt the integrity of local democracy (Karimullah, 2024; Maulana et al., 2025; Noak, 2024; Schnurr, 2023). Data from the Bandung City Bawaslu (2024) shows an increasing trend in money politics reports, which is consistent with similar findings since the 2019 election by various monitoring agencies such as Perludem.

Several studies show that money politics often arises due to the failure of political parties to attract substantive support (Rahmawati & Suryadi, 2023), and has become part of the transactional political culture (Deni, 2023). The practice of *dawn attacks* providing material

incentives ahead of polling day is used to influence vulnerable voters in areas with low levels of education (Eza, 2021; Nurhasanah, 2017).

Within the framework of political communication, this approach shows a failure in building an honest, transparent, and programmatic narrative (Blumler, 2007; Budiarto, 2017). Instead of increasing public involvement, money politics becomes a pragmatic substitution but risks undermining public trust.

The novelty of this research lies in three main aspects. First, this research simultaneously integrates three communication theories: Political Communication Theory (Lasswell, 1936; McQuail, 2010), Symbolic Convergence Theory (Bormann, 1985; Satria, 2010), and Organizational Communication Theory (Pace & Faules, 2010; Cangara, 2024). This theoretical integration allows for a more holistic analysis of the phenomenon of money politics, encompassing the macro (mass communication), meso (organizational), and micro (interpersonal) levels. Second, this research uses a qualitative case study approach with triangulated data sources involving various political actors (candidates, campaign teams, voters, and election supervisors), thus capturing diverse and complementary perspectives. Third, this research was conducted in the context of the 2024 General Election, which is still very much in the making, with data collected in real time during the campaign and voting periods, thus achieving a temporal depth rarely found in similar research.

Based on that, this research is here to fill the gap in the study of political communication in the context of money politics. This research aims to describe the process and form of money politics in the 2024 Legislative Election in Bandung and analyze the role of political communication in this practice. It is hoped that the results will make a theoretical contribution to the study of political communication and practical recommendations for political parties and election supervisory institutions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a qualitative method with a case study approach because it is considered the most relevant to explore the phenomenon of money politics in the 2024 Legislative Election (Pileg) in the city of Bandung. Qualitative methods were chosen so that researchers can understand the process, form, and strategy of political communication in depth, especially in the practice of dawn attacks which are still rampant (Sugiyono, 2017). The case study is considered appropriate because it is able to explore the unique characteristics and complexity of the phenomenon of money politics involving voters, legislative candidates, and election organizers in a specific context in the city of Bandung.

The research paradigm used is constructivism, which views social reality as something that is constructed through human experience and interaction. With this paradigm, researchers can understand how political actors and voters construct the practice of money politics in a certain social space (Lincoln & Guba, 2018). The research subjects include political parties, legislative candidates, success teams, voters registered in the DPT, and election supervisors. The selection of the city of Bandung as the location of the research is based on the complex urban political dynamics and is often a political barometer in West Java.

The data source consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with relevant informants, participant observations, and field documentation. Secondary data was collected from literature, journals, books, and official

documents related to the 2024 Legislative Election. Data analysis techniques are carried out through the stages of reduction, categorization, and interpretation to find important patterns. To ensure the validity of the data, the source and time triangulation technique is used according to Moleong (2017), so that the validity of the information can be maintained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that the practice of *money politics* in the 2024 Legislative Election (PILEG) in the city of Bandung takes place through a systematic process. Interviews with informants SF (February, 2025), KS (February, 2025), and AT (February, 2025) revealed that this process involves three main stages, namely mapping and targeting voters, distributing money or goods, and disguising in the form of social activities. In the early stages, political parties and teams successfully conducted surveys to identify groups of voters who were considered potential. This process is then continued with the provision of cash, basic necessities, and other goods, either directly or through volunteers or influential community leaders.

The distribution of aid is basically transactional, because it is always accompanied by a political message directed to influence voters' choices. HJ (February, 2025) emphasized that this strategy is often packaged in the form of social assistance, community activities, and religious events so that it does not appear as a violation. In fact, social media is used to expand the reach of information related to the assistance without having to meet face-to-face, as explained by AT (February, 2025). SF (February, 2025) added that this practice is carried out in a structured manner with budget support, volunteer networks, and communication patterns that are deliberately designed to appear as a form of concern.

The reasons for using various forms of *money politics* are also diverse. Cash and goods were chosen because they are direct and concrete, especially effective in targeting voters from the financially vulnerable middle and lower economic class (SF, February, 2025; HJ, February, 2025). Meanwhile, the construction of social facilities is used to create the impression of long-term concern and is more difficult to detect as a violation (KS, February, 2025; HN, February, 2025). Other forms in the form of social and religious activities are considered more acceptable to the public because the benefits are felt together, as well as fostering emotional closeness with the candidate (SF, February, 2025; HJ, February, 2025; AT, February, 2025).

The role of political communication seems to be very dominant in this process. Candidates and successful teams use rhetoric by calling the practice "social assistance" or "humanitarian programs" to cover up negative impressions (HJ, February, 2025). Political messages are often conveyed through personal and informal channels to build closeness with the community (KS, February, 2025). Social media is also used as a dual tool, both to legitimize the practice with a positive image and to face public criticism (AT, February, 2025; KS, February, 2025). Thus, political communication not only plays a role as a means of persuasion, but also as a strategy of disguise and moral justification for the practice of money politics that takes place in the 2024 Legislative Election in the city of Bandung.

Discussion

The practice of money politics in the 2024 Legislative Election in the city of Bandung shows that communication dynamics are the most dominant element in political campaign

strategies. The initial process was carried out by mapping and targeting voters, which can theoretically be explained through Political Communication Theory. This mapping serves as a measure to identify audiences; especially low-income groups of people who are more vulnerable to material incentive offers. The communication strategy chosen by the candidate is to frame the giving of money or goods as a form of "social assistance" or "humanitarian program," so that the public is directed to understand the act as a concern, not a violation of the law. This subtle use of political rhetoric shifts negative meanings into positive images, in keeping with the concept of agenda setting that emphasizes shifting people's focus from complex issues to easily acceptable instant benefits.

In the perspective of Organizational Communication Theory, this practice cannot be separated from a neat and coordinated system behind the scenes. The candidate's success team works like a formal organization with a planned communication structure. They collect voter data, segment them based on potential influence, and distribute incentives through a network that has been built. Distribution is never carried out directly by the candidate, but through intermediaries such as community leaders or RT/RW coordinators. This shows the existence of an organizational communication pattern that functions to reduce the risk of being detected by election supervisors, while ensuring that campaign messages still reach the target. This structured distribution reflects how campaign organizations use the principles of coordination, planning, and delegation of tasks as described in modern organizational communication theory.

The various forms of money politics found in the 2024 Legislative Election can be understood through a combination of political communication theory, symbolic convergence, and organizational communication. The giving of cash or goods, for example, is not only transactional but also symbolic. Political Communication Theory explains that this gift is packaged in a frame of concern to create a positive image. While the Theory of Symbolic Convergence shows that this practice has taken root in the political culture of the people, it is seen as a tradition of sharing sustenance ahead of elections. This gives rise to a fantasy theme, which is a collective narrative that is trusted together so as to foster emotional bonds and voter loyalty. Organizational Communication Theory complements this analysis by showing how a neat distribution network makes the practice run effectively without much friction.

The construction of social facilities is also a form of money politics that is more subtle and difficult to detect. From the perspective of Political Communication Theory, this strategy is used as a framing tool to strengthen the candidate's image as a leader who cares about the needs of the public. The facilities built serve as nonverbal political messages that prove the candidate's real contribution. On the other hand, the Symbolic Convergence Theory emphasizes that the development gives rise to a fantasy theme in the form of a collective belief that candidates are able to bring long-term positive change. This kind of narrative makes the public no longer judge the practice as part of money politics, but as a sign of visionary leadership.

In addition, the practice of money politics is also often present through social and religious activities. Candidates deliberately hold recitations, orphan allowances, or other religious events to attract the sympathy of religious voters. According to the Theory of Political Communication, this strategy is intended to build the image of candidates who have religious values and are close to the people. Religious symbols, joint prayer, and the use of religious language are powerful means of framing. The Theory of Symbolic Convergence then explains

that the symbols create a collective meaning, so that the activity is socially accepted and even seen as morally valid. Thus, this form of money politics has a stronger legitimacy in the eyes of voters, although the substance remains in the form of a political exchange strategy.

In the end, the role of political communication in the practice of money politics in the 2024 Legislative Election cannot be underestimated. Candidates and parties use agenda setting to direct public attention, framing to change public perception, and collective symbols to reinforce the legitimacy of their actions. Symbolic Convergence Theory shows how a co-constructed narrative makes society accept the practice as something natural. Meanwhile, Organizational Communication Theory shows that all of these practices are not sporadic activities, but the result of careful planning, systematic distribution, and effective coordination. Thus, money politics in this context is not only a practice of material exchange, but also a complex communication process involving symbolic, organizational, and political strategies, so as to be able to shape public opinion while strengthening voter loyalty.

CONCLUSION

Based on research on the phenomenon of money politics from a political communication perspective in the 2024 Legislative Election in Bandung City, it can be concluded that the process of money politics takes place in a planned manner through voter mapping and targeting, the distribution of incentives in the form of money or goods, and disguised distribution through intermediaries such as community leaders and social activities. Various forms of money politics are chosen according to the socio-cultural context, ranging from instant gifts of money or goods, the construction of public facilities for long-term image building, to social and religious activities that build moral legitimacy. Political communication plays a crucial role in framing the practice of money politics for public acceptance by building a narrative of concern, reducing moral resistance, and shaping a positive candidate image. Suggestions include strengthening regulations and law enforcement to curb the practice of money politics, along with extensive political education to encourage public critical thinking about the impacts of such practices. Campaign funding transparency must be strengthened to ensure political communication strategies operate within legal and ethical boundaries. Furthermore, civil society participation in election oversight is key to preventing the rise of money politics. Academically, further research is needed to examine the role of social media in strengthening or reducing the practice of money politics, as well as to assess the effectiveness of existing regulations in addressing the dynamics of electoral politics in Indonesia.

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