

# Public Perception of Money Politics Acceptance (Case Study in Bandung Regency and West Bandung Regency)

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## Abstract

If money politics tends to be seen as a threat to electoral democracy, what is the public's actual perception of money politics? This research uses quantitative methods, especially descriptive statistics to explain perceptions of the acceptability of money politics in elections. The case study for this research is the Bandung Regency and West Bandung Regency (KBB) areas. This locus shows the existence of spatial influences that explain geopolitical differences in the Greater Bandung area, especially in the district area. The researchers used Stratified-Systematic Random Sampling with 800 samples in Bandung Regency and West Bandung Regency. The margin of error in this study is  $\pm 4\%$  with a confidence level of 95%. It was found that people tend to consider the money politics that occur in elections as normal. However, some variations are variations that reflect differences in views. Apart from that, respondents who will accept money politics tend to choose according to their own conscience. However, the value of giving money or goods can also influence a person's political choice tendencies.

**Keywords:** Money Politics, Elections, Public Perception.

## 1. Introduction

Money politics in electoral democracy is one of the problems commonly encountered. Democratic countries tend to prohibit this practice through legislation or other regulations. The consequences of money politics can lead to criminal acts that are not only detrimental but more than that they can imprison someone. Nevertheless, money politics still occurs and has even been researched in various countries (Aspinall et al., 2017; Bowler & Donovan, 2016; Cagé, 2020; Dagan, 2009; Faqi et al., 2023; Hicken et al., 2019; Mohamed Zahra, 2021; Muhtadi, 2019;

Weschle, 2022). However, from various previous studies, we question how the public perceives money politics, especially in non-urban areas.

The development of studies on money and politics shows more advanced findings and is not limited to concerns about democracy. Money politics also contributes to the political equality debate (Fisher & Eisenstadt, 2004). Therefore, capital owners who become politicians tend to find it easier to gain influence or power, because they have a different starting point from other politicians, especially in funding party activities, volunteers, campaigns, etc. Thus, there is concern that money in politics can damage democracy and create injustice, although there is also an opinion that money in politics is a legitimate form of citizen communication (Dagan, 2009). In addition, public perceptions of money politics are influenced by partisan interests, sources and uses of funds, and distribution methods (Bowler & Donovan, 2016). Moreover, money in politics can increase party extremism (Tomashevskiy, 2022). This is caused by personal donations to political parties so parties tend to follow the ideological principles of certain donors. Therefore, the study of money politics still has not found a breakthrough and continues to develop.

Money tends to be seen as a tool to achieve political goals and thus threatens the integrity of democratic discourse (Kirshner, 2003). This describes how citizens discuss their political preferences (Dagan, 2009). Groups that tend to accept money politics are those who are oriented towards interests that can be felt directly, especially economic impacts. However, the context of money politics is more associated with corruption, campaign violations, and weak citizen political participation (Blass et al., 2012).

Researchers focused on elaborating on the context of money politics as a threat to democracy. In this case, the researchers do not examine the causal mechanisms that cause money politics to occur but examine the fundamental basis in the study of money politics, namely public perception of money politics. This research maps public perceptions of money politics so that it can produce strategic data in following up on money politics issues, especially in non-urban areas, such as districts or rural areas.

Researchers argue that in district or rural areas money politics tends to be considered normal in elections. This fairness arises because the electoral democracy system allows the transaction process of exchanging votes with certain economic value. However, because the structure of society is diverse, it tends to produce variations in the acceptance of money politics. However, a stronger tendency is people tend to accept gifts of money or goods in elections. Therefore, the researchers emphasize that it is important to increase public awareness of honest and fair democracy. As well as political education in district areas, especially rural areas. This research captures public perception in the Bandung Regency and Garut Regency areas to illustrate the importance of understanding the map of community political awareness in realizing direct, general, free, secret, honest, and fair elections.

## **2. Methods and Case Selection**

Researchers used quantitative methods, especially descriptive statistics to explain perceptions of the acceptability of money politics in elections. The research is located in Bandung Regency and

West Bandung Regency (KBB) as a case study examining the acceptance of money politics in general elections. Geographically, this area is close to the center of government of West Java, Bandung City, and is included in the Greater Bandung Area. However, in the map of the Electoral Districts, Bandung Regency and KBB are included in the electoral district of West JavaII, which is different from Bandung City and Cimahi City which are categorized as the electoral district of West Java I. Therefore, the regional selection for Electoral District II illustrates variations in spatial studies or regional. As is the case in the number of seats, Electoral District II has 10 seats, while Electoral District I is smaller, He got 7 seats. Thus, this research shows that there are spatial influences that explain geopolitical differences within the Greater Bandung area, especially regarding the perceptions of people outside urban areas or within the district area.

The sample in this study is based on the number of voters in Bandung Regency and West Bandung Regency, with a total of 3,973,080 voters. If separated from the total number of voters, voters in Bandung Regency are 66.83% of the total voters or 2,655,214 voters. Meanwhile, in West Bandung Regency there were 33.17% or 1,317,866 voters. In sampling, technically used Stratified-Systematic Random Sampling with a total sample size of 800 respondents. This sample was spread across 47 sub-districts and 80 villages/sub-districts in Bandung Regency and West Bandung Regency. The sample in each district consisted of 400 respondents who were randomly selected proportionally with a Margin of Error of  $\pm 4\%$  with a confidence level of 95%.

### 3. Result and Discussion

In the process of mapping public perceptions regarding the acceptance of money politics, researchers began with the question "What is your assessment of giving money/goods in elections?" This question maps people's basic perceptions regarding the acceptance level of money politics. Found the following data:

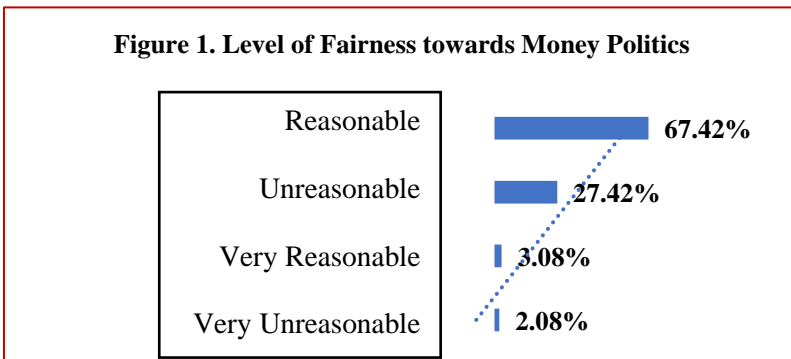
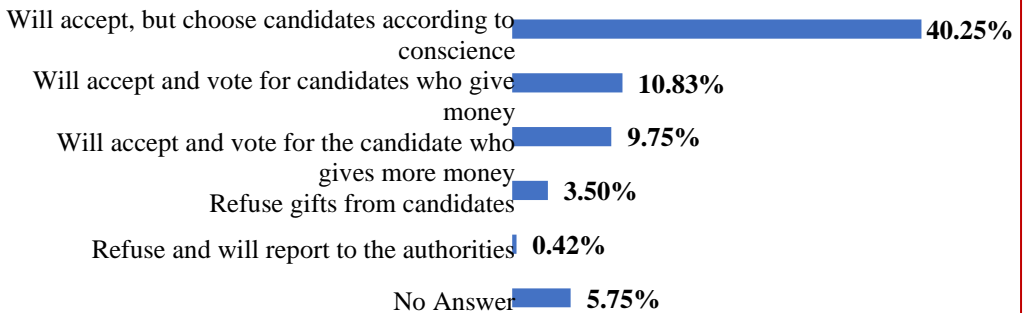


Figure 1 shows the level of reasonableness regarding money politics and the result is that 67.42% of people think it is normal, plus 3.08% of people think it is very normal. This means that there are 70.50% of the sample who think that money politics is something that commonly occurs in elections. Meanwhile, only 29.50% (a combination of unnatural and very unnatural) considered this context to be unnatural.

The line in Figure 1 illustrates that there is a big difference between reasonable and unreasonable assumptions. The deemed fair percentage shows a value that is more than twice the unreasonable percentage. This means that this research confirms that society's dominant perception of money politics is normal. However, it should be emphasized that this research does not examine the reasons or causal mechanisms that cause a high level of fairness towards money politics to emerge. Researchers focus more on describing evidence of public acceptance of money politics.

Apart from that, we explored these findings, especially the 70.50% of respondents who thought that money politics was something normal and very natural. Follow up the response with the question "Would you accept it if election participants or successful teams gave money or prizes?" It was found that the majority of respondents, 40.25% of respondents who answered fair and very reasonable regarding money politics, stated that they would accept the money given, but would still choose according to their own conscience. This means that money politics does not directly impact a person's choices.

**Figure 2. Acceptance of Money Politics**



There were 20.58% of respondents who would receive money or gifts. Interestingly, out of 20.58%, there are 9.75% who will choose the candidate with the largest gift. Therefore, of the total respondents, money politics can only influence 20.58% of respondents, while the other numbers show variations, such as acceptance and rejection. Overall acceptance of money politics is 60.83%, although the majority of them are not influenced in making political choices.

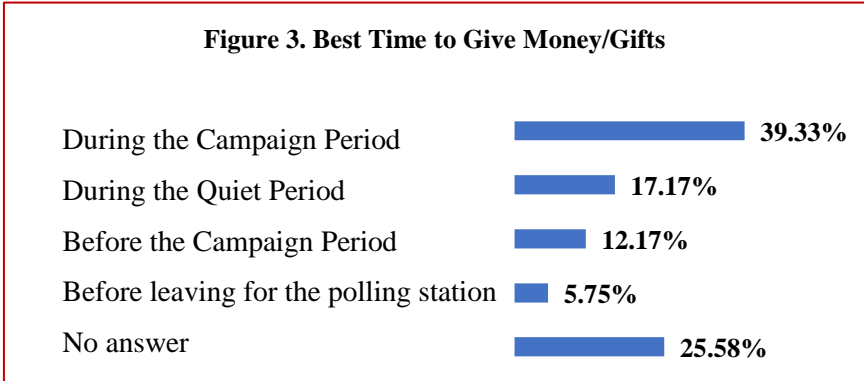
Furthermore, Figure 2 shows that there were two rejections from respondents, even though they considered that money politics was normal in elections. As many as 3.50% of respondents rejected the existence of money politics in elections. Their assumption of reasonableness tends to show that money politics in electoral politics is difficult to eliminate. In this context, they show their political attitude by refusing to give money or gifts.

Apart from that, data shows that there are 0.42% of people who not only refuse to give money and gifts in the election but will also report it to the authorities, especially the Election Supervisory Committee (Panwaslu) in their respective sub-districts or sub-districts. However, this figure does not show a strong influence, because the number does not reach 1% of the total

sample. Therefore, it would be ideal if this number could increase in the next general election or regional head election.

Afterward, there were still 5.75% of respondents who did not answer our question. It means that the acceptance and rejection numbers are likely to still tend to change. Although, it can be said that these numbers tend not to have a significant impact on changes in the acceptance or rejection numbers. In this context, researchers found that acceptance of giving money and gifts in elections tends to dominate compared to respondents who consider it unnatural or normal but reject it.

Researchers are also trying to map public perceptions regarding when it is best to give money or gifts in elections. Figure 3 shows that the majority of respondents think the campaign stage is the best time to give money/gifts. Figure 3 also confirms that the 'dawn attack' or giving money or gifts in the morning before the time for voting and counting of votes was only chosen by 5.75% of respondents. However, this percentage tends to be very likely affected by the absence of answers because the figure reaches 25.58%. This amount tends to influence the context of determining the best time to give money or gifts.



Thereupon, we mapped the amount of funds desired by respondents. The researchers asked, "If election participants or successful teams offer money, what is the appropriate amount?" It was found that 1.83% of respondents chose the answer Rp. 21,000 – Rp. 50,000. This means that the votes owned by respondents can be exchanged for a relatively small nominal amount.

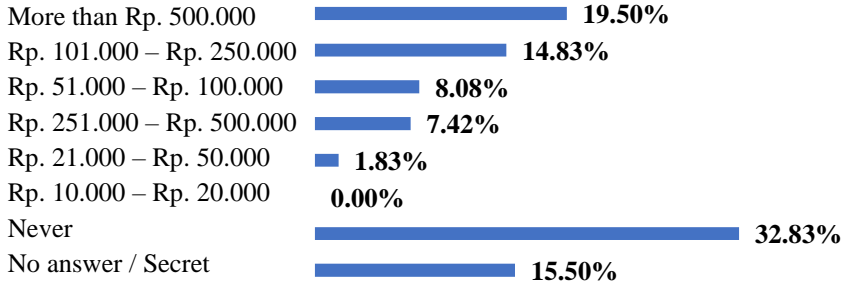
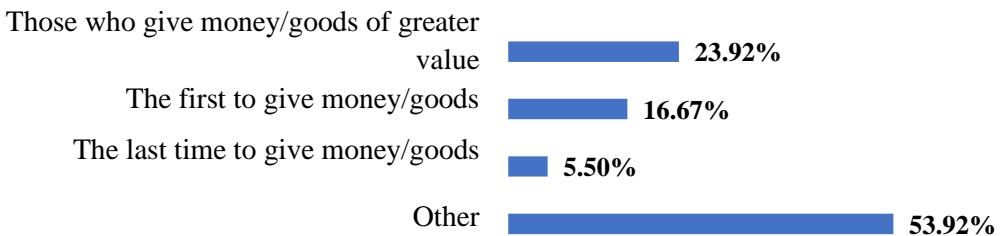
**Figure 4. Amount of funds desired by respondents**

Figure 4 shows that there are variations in respondents' expectations for the nominal amount of money given in the election. However, it can be underlined that there were 15.50% of respondents did not answer or kept their choice a secret. This figure contributes quite a bit to each choice. However, it was found that the amount that tends to be desired is more than one hundred thousand rupiah. If you calculate the number of respondents who expect more than one hundred thousand rupiah, the figure appears to be 41.75%. It means that this number is greater than the never which only gets 32.83%.

Then, the researchers elaborated on variations in giving money with the question "If more than one election participant gives money, then who is chosen?" Having more money tends to be a determining factor in making choices. As many as 23.92% of respondents stated that they would choose election participants who gave more money. Therefore, this figure shows voters' pragmatism in making their choice. The size of the profits obtained by respondents tends to be temporary because it is based on money politics.

**Figure 5. Money Politics and Choice Making**

This question is a control and triangulation of the data produced in Figure 2. In Figure 2, 20.58% of respondents will receive money or gifts. However, in Figure 5 there has been an increase. This means that there is a possibility of bias in respondents' answers. As well as determining attitudes towards acceptance or rejection of money politics still tends to be dynamic. The nominal

influence or amount of giving is also a determining factor, as shown in Figure 5, that 23.92% of respondents tend to choose the election participant who gives the most money.

However, this data still confirms our argument that acceptance of money politics tends not to have a dominant influence on determining political choices. This can be confirmed by another percentage which is 53.92%. Table 1 displays variations of the other answers. If in Figure 2 the rejection rate is below 5%, Table 1 shows an increase to 19.75%. It tends to be influenced by respondents who thought that money politics was something unnatural from the start.

Table 1. Other Answers to Money Politics and Choice-Making

Reject	19.75%
According to Conscience	4.42%
Secret	1.83%
Known	0.50%
Unknown	27.42%

Furthermore, to elaborate on factors other than giving money and goods in determining political choices, the figure factors that can influence respondents' political choices are elaborated into the question "Who are the figures or figures who can influence your political choices?" As a result, we found data that 52.33% of respondents did not vote based on the influence of public figures or figures. This figure explains that there are other factors that influence voters. This also confirms that money politics has the potential to be a factor in determining a person's political choices. As many as 20.58% of respondents in this study tend to be influenced by money politics.

Figure 6. Influence of Figures on Political Choices

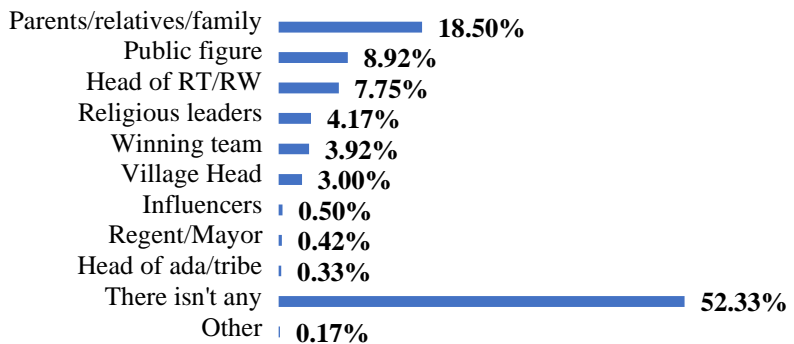


Figure 6 shows that the influence of figures or characters does not dominate the influence on a person's political choices. However, family and environment, including the area of residence influence a person's political choices. emphasize that the study of the influence of figures on political choices is a control in mapping other factors that influence a person's political choices. It was found that the influence of figures was not the main factor, because the majority of respondents were not influenced by figures. However, in this context, the researchers realize the weakness of this research is that other factors, apart from figures and money politics, are not mapped well.

## Shortcuts to Victory and Voter Pragmatism

This research confirms that money in politics has contributed to political inequality (Fisher & Eisenstadt, 2004). The visualization of the images in the previous discussion presents a series of data regarding how money can influence a person's political choices, even though it does not dominate the entire sample. However, what needs to be emphasized in this context is that money politics can be used as a shortcut to influencing pragmatic voters.

Fairness and honesty in election principles are biased, it also confirms researchers' concerns about weakening the quality of a country's democracy. Those who have capital tend to be able to better prepare various needs for winning an election, starting from the campaign team, campaign advertisements, and other campaign strategies. Therefore, the discourse of fairness in the election process is biased due to unequal access or capital owned by each party or candidate.

The role of money in politics tends to be quite crucial, especially for those who do not have social capital that has been cultivated for a long time, not only in the lead-up to political contestation. Money can trump fairness in the electoral process because financial capital owners can buy media influence. They can carry out campaigns through various media, both conventional and non-conventional. Forming a candidate's image tends to be easier when campaigning through the media. Moreover, people who use the media as a source of political information can easily change their choices during elections. It is also related to campaign logistics or campaign props. Sufficient financial capital can place campaign props in strategic places that people frequently pass by. Apart from that, money can also prepare candidates to organize other campaign activities that are relatively more popular with the public, such as concerts, health walks with prizes, and other alternative campaign activities.

Furthermore, financial capital can also influence local leadership, through the assistance offered by candidates, including gifts of money or goods offered to community leaders or leaders of mass organizations. They can encourage local figures to influence their followers to vote for a particular candidate. This clearly emphasizes the injustice between competing candidates that have finances and only rely on social capital.

Besides, financial capital owners can build a network of successful or winning teams in their electoral districts. Empowering people tends to require costs, whether for operations, transportation, or even their incentives as part of a winning team. Owners of sufficient capital tend to be able to form this network because they have the money to mobilize the masses. Through their team and network, they can distribute money or goods to the public so they want to vote for the candidate they are fighting for. Because of this, a transaction process occurs between election participants, the success team, and voters. These gaps clearly make a big difference between those who have financial capital and those who do not. Thus, money politics can be a shortcut for someone to achieve victory.

Moreover, in electoral democracy, the role of money in politics is difficult to avoid (Aspinall et al., 2010). Money is part of efforts to achieve political goals. This is also the beginning of how political corruption tends to spread in electoral democracies. Thus, money politics will always be associated with corruption. Candidates who have lost their capital in the contest will then tend to look for replacements at the same time and exercise their authority as public officials.



Therefore, money politics can form an unhealthy state process because public officials will be oriented towards increasing their personal wealth and therefore tend to ignore integrity, professionalism and other obligations attached to certain political positions.

It also confirms that the patterns that emerge in money politics describe the interaction between politicians and society. Then, for those who choose candidates based on giving money or goods, this confirms the orientation of voters which tends to be temporary and material-oriented. Therefore, money politics in this context not only speaks of the candidate's pragmatism to win the election, but also the pragmatism of voters who tend to prefer giving money and goods rather than the candidate's promising vision, mission, program, or track record. The context of pragmatism illustrates that the orientation that is formed tends to be transactional and temporary. Election participants and candidates offer money or goods, while voters exchange it for the votes they have. This exchange confirms that money in politics is part of communication and preferences (Dagan, 2009).

The normalization of money politics as evidenced in this research illustrates that this practice is commonly used in elections. In this context, money politics tends to shape a pragmatic political culture in society. Without a political process or dialogue between the public and candidates, money can shorten the process. Therefore, there is the term democracy for sale (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). Candidates will tend to rely on financial capital or campaign funds to be able to compete in elections. Then, voters who have rejected money politics from the start tend to increasingly distrust the political process, especially elections. Therefore, public trust in government and political participation could potentially decline. However, on the other hand, this illustrates voters' pragmatism because they tend to prioritize immediate interests or impacts that can be felt immediately without considering further the consequences for the government process.

#### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Studies on money politics tend to point to the threat of money politics to democracy, but what is the public's actual perception of money politics? It was found that people generally consider the money politics that occur in elections to be normal. It indicates that money politics is common in political momentum, both in presidential elections, legislative elections, and regional head elections. However, understanding the fairness of money politics in elections does not mean completely justifying money politics. Some variations illustrate differences in views even though money politics is a normal phenomenon in elections.

Researchers found that the majority of respondents who would accept money politics tended to choose according to their own conscience. Therefore, money politics cannot necessarily influence a person's political choices. However, the value of giving money or goods can also influence a person's political choice tendencies, especially for those who will receive gifts of money or goods.

Then, the data used also shows that 'dawn attacks' or giving money or goods several hours before voting tends to be ineffective in influencing someone's political choices. This type of money

politics model can also be correlated with those who tend to vote for candidates who are the last to give money or goods. However, the data shows that the percentage is small or not dominant. Therefore, the strategy of giving money or goods tends to influence those who are categorized as voters who have no attachment to a party or candidate, as well as those who are influenced by the amount and time of giving.

Apart from that, the data shows that the tendency for votes to be exchanged for relatively small amounts is still very likely to occur. This means that this figure shows voters' pragmatism, lack of political education, and weak attachment to parties or candidates. Therefore, we practically recommend to the government, especially the National Unity and Politics Agency, to intensify the dissemination of political education to the community, especially in rural or village environments. Political education for village community movements can increase their awareness of the consequences of money politics (Pahlevi & Amrurrobi, 2019). Then, strengthening local wisdom becomes an alternative option in reducing money politics in the region (Kurniawan & Hermawan, 2019).

We also recommend to Election Organizers, both the General Election Commission and the General Election Supervisory Body, to intensify outreach, not only to use their voting rights in voting. However, it provides more public awareness to be involved in the process or all stages of the election. Therefore, it is important to socialize the concept of participatory supervision to the public, especially for those who tend to easily change their political choices just because of money, without considering programs or policies that could affect their lives in the next five years. This is also in line with providing awareness to the public to better consider track records and development ideas or visions offered in the process of making political choices.

Methodologically, this research is limited to processing descriptive statistical data which tends to prioritize the author's interpretation rather than statistical testing. Therefore, the development of more advanced analytical methods such as regression analysis is highly recommended. For example, how does age, income and education influence perceptions of money politics? This testing tends to produce arguments with stronger evidence. Apart from that, the use of more advanced statistical testing tools is also recommended to produce the latest analysis regarding people's behavior towards money politics.

Theoretically, this research contributes to presenting data on perceptions of money politics as proven by spatial studies in Bandung Regency and West Bandung Regency. Researchers recommend enriching the number of cases, both temporally and/or spatially, as well as adding the influence of other factors for more advanced statistical testing. Thus the arguments and theories produced make it possible to contribute to the development of political science studies.

#### Acknowledgement

This research was funded by The National Research and Innovation Agency (BRI) through the Research and Innovation for Advanced Indonesia scheme.

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