

Efforts to Exterminate Money Politics and Build an Integrity Based Democracy in Bireuen Regency

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Abstrak

Kabupaten Bireuen, seperti di banyak daerah lain di Indonesia, praktik politik uang telah menjadi masalah yang signifikan. Hal ini dapat dilihat dari berbagai kasus korupsi yang melibatkan politisi dan pejabat pemerintah. Dampaknya banyak kebijakan yang tidak memihak kepada masyarakat dan lebih mementingkan kepentingan golongan politiknya masing-masing. Permasalahan muncul dikarenakan praktik politik uang sudah membudaya dan membuat masyarakat menjadi skeptis dengan politik yang ada di Kabupaten Bireuen. Oleh karena itu, perlu dilakukan upaya-upaya yang sistematis dan komprehensif untuk memerangi politik uang dan membangun demokrasi berintegritas di Kabupaten Bireuen. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menjelaskan upaya-upaya yang dapat dilakukan dalam memerangi politik uang dan membangun politik berintegritas di Kabupaten Bireuen. Penelitian yang melalui pendekatan fenomenologi ini akan dilakukan dalam beberapa tahapan, mulai dari persiapan, pelaksanaan, hingga tahap evaluasi. Adapun hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa tiga pihak vital yang akan dalam menjaga integritas demokrasi dan politik uang di Kabupaten Bireuen. Pihak-pihak ini adalah pemerintah sebagai penyelenggara pemilu, calon kandidat pimpinan daerah, dan masyarakat. Salah satu pihak melakukan kecurangan, maka berdampak terhadap image dan kualitas demokrasi di kabupaten Bireuen.

Kata Kunci: Bireuen; Demokrasi; Integritas; Politik uang; Provinsi Aceh.

Abstract

In Bireuen Regency, as in many other regions of Indonesia, money politics has become a significant issue. This is evident in various corruption cases involving politicians and government officials. The repercussions include policies that often disregard public interest, instead prioritizing the agendas of specific political factions. This problem persists due to the cultural entrenchment of money politics, which has fostered public skepticism toward politics in Bireuen Regency. Consequently, systematic and comprehensive efforts are needed to combat money politics and establish an integrity-based democracy in Bireuen. The objective of this study is to outline measures that can be taken to counter money politics and build an integrity-driven political environment in Bireuen. Adopting a phenomenological approach, this research will be conducted in several phases, including preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The findings reveal that three key stakeholders play a crucial role in safeguarding democratic integrity and countering money politics in Bireuen: the government as the election organizer, regional leadership candidates, and the public. Should any of these parties engage in malpractice, it would adversely impact the image and quality of democracy in Bireuen Regency."

Keywords: Bireuen; Democracy; Integrity; Money Politic; Aceh Province.

INTRODUCTION

Money politics is a serious threat to the integrity of democracy in Indonesia. It involves the unethical or illegal use of money to influence political decisions, such as elections (Padilah & Irwansyah, 2023). The prevention of money politics is crucial to ensure that democratic processes are fair, transparent, and strengthen citizen participation (Amatahir, 2023). Despite the fact that in a democratic state system, money politics seems to be a very difficult thing to solve, even in Muslim-majority areas (Wardhana, 2020; Wahid, 2021). In fact, the province of Aceh already has the authority to manage its own government, even to foreign cooperation (Novialdi & Rafsanjani, 2022), but the political culture, and the forms of fraud that occur in the dynamics of politics, are still not much different from those that occur throughout Indonesia.

In Bireuen Regency, as in many other regions in Indonesia, the practice of money politics has become a significant problem. This can be seen from various corruption cases involving politicians and government officials. Therefore, it is necessary to make systematic and comprehensive efforts to combat money politics and build democracy with integrity in Bireuen Regency (Jafar, 2009). The involvement of various parties in combating money politics, but there are always elements from the community and also the government itself in smoothing the practice of money politics and destroying a good democratic order (Fatayati, 2017; Silalahi, 2022).

These efforts include increasing transparency in political campaign funding, imposing limits on financial donations, strengthening controls on political funding, and improving the integrity of election organisers and election supervisory bodies (Rizki et al., 2024). In addition, effective political education and public education about the dangers of money politics are also very important to reduce the influence of money politics (Pahlevi & Amrurobbi, 2020). Communities in villages, the smallest government hierarchy in Indonesia, have a role in maintaining democracy and money politics (Basri, 2020; Arsyad, 2022). Village governments can even become pioneers of anti-money politics villages to help safeguard democracy, as in several regions in Indonesia, such as at least 17 villages in Bireuen Regency.

Thus, efforts to combat money politics and build democracy with integrity in Bireuen Regency not only aim to reduce corruption and strengthen democracy, but also to ensure that people's votes are not determined by financial power, but by greater interests, namely a fair and equitable future for all citizens (Pahlevi & Amrurobbi, 2020).

The implementation of regional head elections is not without problems and obstacles, one of which is money politics which is increasingly evident, money politics in regional elections is a real deviation in the world of politics carried out by irresponsible individuals to get the most votes in the Bireuen regional elections. Money politics is contrary to human nature, religion, community customs and democratic values from the point of view of the law (Yusfriadi, Y. (2020).

Money politics is an act that is prohibited in the Indonesian constitution, Law No. 7 of 2017 Article 280 Letter J which states that “*pelaksana, peserta, dan tim kampanye pemilu dilarang menjanjikan atau memberikan uang atau materi lainnya kepada peserta kampanye pemilu*” (‘implementers, participants, and election campaign teams are prohibited from promising or giving money or other materials to election campaign participants’). Article 523 of Law No. 7 Year Paragraph (1) also explains that “*setiap pelaksana, peserta, dan/atau tim kampanye pemilu dilarang menjanjikan atau memberikan uang atau materi lainnya sebagai imbalan kepada peserta kampanye pemilu secara langsung ataupun tidak secara langsung*” (‘every implementer, participant, and/or election campaign team is prohibited from promising or giving money or other materials in return for election campaign participants directly or indirectly’) (Robi, 2024). This fact shows that in terms of rules, there are already standard provisions on prohibitions in the implementation of elections.

Indonesian Constitution No. 10/2016 also explains the definition of money politics as the act of promising and/or giving money or other materials to influence election organisers and/or voters. The 1945 Constitution Article 18 paragraph (4) also explains that Governors, Regents and Mayors respectively as heads of provincial, district and city local governments are democratically elected (Liwun, 2021). The laws mentioned above also then make it very clear that money politics is strictly prohibited. So that the commission of a violation of the regulation is a serious disregard, but the enforcement of the regulation is very complicated because it is done on a massive scale. Even though the ulama have an important role in government and politics in Aceh, violations are still difficult to avoid (Abidin, 2021).

The Indonesian state upholds democratic values, democracy in Indonesia has been going on since Indonesian independence which is stated in the 1945 constitution which explicitly states the democratic government because it is based on the sovereignty of the people. The 1945 Constitution regulates the sovereignty of the people twice. First, in the

opening of the fourth paragraph "*maka disusunlah kemerdekaan kebangsaan Indonesia itu dalam suatu Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Indonesia yang berkedaulatan Rakyat*" ("then compile the independence of the Indonesian nation in a Constitution of the State of Indonesia which is sovereign over the people"). Second, in Article 1 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution as amended reads ("*Kedaulatan berada di tangan rakyat dan dilaksanakan menurut Undang Undang Dasar*") ("Sovereignty is in the hands of the people and is exercised according to the Basic Law") (Nuna & Moonti, 2019). Democracy is also reflected in the ideology of the Indonesian state, namely Pancasila, in the fourth principle which reads ("*Kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh hikmah kebijaksanaan dalam permusyawaratan/perwakilan*") ("Democracy led by wisdom in deliberation / representation") which is imbued with the first, second, third and fifth principles.

Based on the explanation above, the discussion in this paper will be divided into several parts. First, the initial discussion will begin with a theoretical explanation of money politics and democracy. Second, efforts to prevent money politics that have been carried out in Bireuen district. Third, the community's perspective on democracy with integrity in Bireuen district.

METHOD

This research approach uses qualitative phenomenology. This research activity will be carried out in the Bireuen Regency area, with the main target being the general public for problem solving for the democratic process in Bireuen Regency. To build a democracy with integrity and free from money politics, collaborative efforts are needed involving various parties, including the government, civil society, academics and the media. The data for this research was obtained from the results of the Forum Group Discussion (FGD). The FGDs aimed to provide a forum for various parties to discuss, share views, and formulate effective strategies in combating money politics in Bireuen Regency. Through this FGD, it is hoped that a shared understanding of the negative impact of money politics and the importance of building a transparent and integrity democratic system in Bireuen Regency can be created.

The concept of the activity will be designed is a Forum Group Discussion (FGD) by gathering academics, civil society, government and media in Bireuen Regency, then delivering material and discussions on Efforts to combat money politics and build Democracy with integrity in Bireuen Regency and efforts that must be made for money

politics ahead of regional head elections in Bireuen Regency. The inputs obtained from the FGDs were then analysed and presented in a descriptive discussion about the efforts that can be made to eradicate money politics and build democracy with integrity in Bireuen Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion in this study is based on the results of data collection from Focus Group Discussion (FGD) activities, interviews, and documents related to the laws governing the prohibition of money politics in Indonesia, including Law No. 7/2017 on General Elections, specifically Article 278 paragraph (2), Article 280 paragraph (1) letter j, Article 284, Article 286 paragraph (1), Article 515, and Article 523. In addition, Law No. 10 of 2016 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents and Mayors also regulates the prohibition and sanctions of money politics in regional head elections. It is known that although the rules to control money politics do not exist, cases of money politics in Bireuen Regency still occur and the government continues to strive to eradicate money politics by synergising between related institutions, enforcing rules indiscriminately and forming anti-corruption villages and anti-money politics villages. As a more scientific discussion, this section will explain several concepts and theories. The concepts used are the concept of money politics and democracy, and the theory of clientelism. These concepts and theories become a framework of thought that will look at the practice of money politics and the implementation of democracy in Bireuen Regency.

Democracy And Money Politic Concept

Jean Jacques Rousseau said that democracy is a stage or a process that a country must go through in order to prosper (Rousseau, 2007). This definition emphasises the process of democracy, not the outcome of a democratic process. In today's democratic practice, Hans Kelsen astoundingly argues that countries that claim to be democracies do not fully understand the process of representation. According to Kelsen, the principle of representation that should be applied focuses on accountability to voters. This means that in a representative-based democracy, a great deal of responsibility is required, especially in moral terms, towards the voters, not towards the political parties that support them (Thalhah, 2007).

Democracy is a concept that is very often discussed and expressed by academics and political practitioners in Indonesia. Democracy is a concept that emphasises the role of society as the main actor in state activities (Thalhah, 2009). However, in fact, the community is positioned more as an object of exploitation for the political interests of a party or other interest groups. Thus, the next fact that is found is that the community is oppressed by the democratic system and is helpless because politicians already have the peak of power and the community still does not understand that the power of democracy is actually in their hands. Money politics then becomes an effective means to smoothen the practice of democracy that seems designed for procedural practices only.

Theory Clientelism

Clientelism is a form of socio-political relationship in which a patron, i.e. a political actor with power or influence, provides certain favours, resources, or benefits to an individual or group of clients in return for political support, loyalty, or assistance in gaining or maintaining power. These relationships are usually informal and involve exchanges such as goods, services, or political promises (Nastain, M, 2022; Berenschot, 2018). the empirical tests of theories of clientelism quoted above rely on assessing whether loyalists or swing voters are more likely to be the recipients of targeted transfers (Rodríguez, 2024; Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2002).

Clientelism is still an inherent phenomenon in democratic practices in Indonesia, especially in the context of local elections and local political dynamics. Essentially, clientelism as a form of corrupt behaviour is a two-way transaction involving the supply and demand sides, so its understanding requires analysis from both sides. The continuous demand from citizens or voters is a result of the community's low capacity to ensure that their welfare interests are accommodated in the political agenda.

Patrons and Clients

This relationship involves two parties with different socioeconomic status. Patrons are parties who have resources (economic, political, social) and power, while clients are parties who need resources and support from patrons (Hefni. M, 2009; Khan, 1998). The allocation and distribution of public resources then becomes more of an exchange between the patron's generosity and the client's political loyalty.

The phenomenon of money politics in Bireuen can be seen as a concrete form of the practice of patron-client relations in the electoral context. Here, regional head candidates or parties (as patrons) offer cash, goods, or promises of assistance to voters (as clients) in order to get votes in the election. Social and economic inequality encourages people, especially those in vulnerable positions, to accept such rewards, because they see politics not as a space to fight for aspirations, but as a pragmatic opportunity to obtain direct benefits.

Reciprocity and Mutual Benefit

Clientelistic relationships are not one-sided. There is an expectation of reciprocity, whereby patrons give something and clients give something in return in the form of loyalty, votes, or other forms of assistance (Nastain, M, 2022). Mutual relationships create a paradox: democracy should rely on the principles of representation, citizen participation, and the rational exchange of ideas in choosing leaders. However, in the context of clientelism, political relationships are built on the basis of personal transactions, not programmes or policy visions. This is where money politics becomes the main instrument in binding patron-client relationships.

Dependency and Inequality

There is an element of dependency on the part of the client towards the patron, as the client requires resources that are held by the patron. This inequality is also reflected in the social and economic status differences between the two (Nastain, M, 2022). The phenomenon of money politics in Bireuen is a concrete manifestation of this relationship. In the context of regional elections, socio-economic inequality makes many voters feel that accepting money or assistance from regional head candidates is the only way to obtain direct benefits from the political process. On the other hand, patrons exploit this dependency to secure votes through transactional approaches, rather than through the exchange of ideas or programmes.

Relationship Patterns

Clientelism can be informal and personal, but it can also be organised in the form of broader networks or systems, for example in the form of promises of assistance from regional head candidates to individual voters. However, it can also be organised systematically, through broader power networks such as political parties, campaign

teams, volunteers, or even community organisations. In many cases, money politics is not merely an individual practice, but is systematically regulated by political networks that have an interest in maintaining power. Money politics becomes a tool for maintaining patron-client relationships on a mass and structured scale.

Political Impact

The political impact is not merely a personal relationship between patron and client, but also has a broad political impact, particularly on the electoral process, public policy, and the formation of power (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). When patron-client relationships are wrapped in the practice of money politics, the impact can be very damaging to the foundations of democracy. The pattern of reciprocal relationships between patrons and clients, when wrapped in the practice of money politics, has a serious impact on democracy. Local elections become a venue for transactions rather than a contest of ideas, thereby undermining the representative nature of the people's voice.

Political money also fosters policies that prioritise political favours over public interest. Additionally, the power structure becomes exclusive and anti-meritocratic. As a result, democracy is distorted into a tool for perpetuating elite power, while citizen participation becomes pragmatic and transactional.

Efforts to Prevent Money Politics in Bireuen Regency

Political dynamics in a region are very difficult to measure, mainly because political directions can change course very easily. It is therefore not surprising when a politician misjudges the potential for victory or defeat. However, this does not mean that this study cannot be analysed to find an explanation for a phenomenon. In this section, we will discuss the phenomenon of political money in Bireuen District and also integrity in democracy.

During the campaign period, candidates engage in what is known as patronage politics. Patronage is the distribution of benefits among politicians and the individual distribution of goods to voters, workers, or campaign activists. The aim is to gain political support from them (Aspinal, 2019). As the local elections (*pilkada*) in Bireuen District approach, the issue of political dowries is gaining traction. One of the main challenges in conducting the democratic process in Bireuen is the practice of money politics.

Regional elections are considered a representation of grassroots democracy, but democratic celebrations seem to struggle to reflect the idealism of pure democracy, which aims to implement, revitalise, and empower democratic education (Sulaksono et al., 2024). This occurs because the pattern of competition in regional elections has been controlled by parties with vested interests and financial power. Law No. 10 of 2016 defines money politics as the act of promising and/or giving money or other material goods to influence election organisers and/or voters. If truly aimed at democratic education, every election organiser in Bireuen would certainly strive to demonstrate their best performance in order to build community participation.

The majority of the public seems to have become accustomed to money politics in various political processes, whether in regent/deputy regent elections or governor/deputy governor elections. In fact, one of the objectives of regional elections is to minimise money politics. However, in the current democratic system, money politics has become increasingly difficult to control. Various laws and regulations prohibiting such practices appear to be mere formalities that are ultimately violated.

The phenomenon of money politics does not only occur among voters but also has the potential to spread among election organisers who offer certain rewards. Money politics risks producing leaders who prioritise personal and group interests over the interests of the state and its citizens. Money politics is prohibited under the Indonesian constitution, Law No. 7 of 2017 Article 280 Letter J, which states that ‘election campaign organisers, participants, and teams are prohibited from promising or giving money or other material goods to election campaign participants.’ Article 523 of Law No. 7 of 2017, Paragraph (1), also explains that ‘every election campaign organiser, participant, and/or campaign team is prohibited from promising or giving money or other material benefits as compensation to election campaign participants, either directly or indirectly.’

The aforementioned law clearly states that money politics is strictly prohibited. The government and election organisers have implemented various measures to eradicate money politics and promote quality democracy in Bireuen. Agusni, as the Chairman of the Election Supervisory Board (Panwaslih) in Bireuen, urged all mayoral candidates and their supporters to campaign in a healthy manner and comply with regulations prohibiting money politics. He also urged the public not to be tempted to accept offers of money politics from relevant parties during the local elections (Pilkada) in Bireuen. Agusni, who is the chairman of the Bireuen Election Supervisory Board, stated that "The Bireuen

Election Supervisory Board will impose strict sanctions on violations of money politics in this year's local elections, including criminal penalties for both the giver and the recipient. Agusni also noted that these sanctions align with the Election Law, specifically Article 187, paragraphs 1 and 2. Under these regulations, any individual who intentionally violates the law by promising or providing money or other materials to influence voters, either directly or indirectly, may face imprisonment ranging from 36 to 72 months, as well as a fine of at least Rp 200 million to Rp 1 billion (Harian Rakyat Aceh, 2024).

The Bireuen District Prosecutor's Office in Aceh is intensifying its efforts to raise awareness about preventing money politics ahead of the 2024 regional elections. These efforts include community meetings, putting up banners, distributing posters and other materials containing appeals not to engage in money politics, and establishing anti-money politics villages. Munawal Hadi stated, 'Those involved in political corruption may face criminal penalties ranging from a minimum of 36 months to a maximum of 72 months in prison. Through the extensive awareness campaigns we are conducting, we hope to prevent the public from engaging in political corruption.' The criminal penalties for those involved in political corruption are outlined in Article 187A, Paragraph (1) and Paragraph (2) of Law No. 10 of 2016 on the second amendment to Law No. 1 of 2015 on the Government Regulation Replacing Law No. 1 of 2014 on the election of governors, regents, and mayors, which has been enacted into law (Febrianto, 2024).

Member of Commission V of the Indonesian House of Representatives for the Aceh II electoral district, Ruslan Daud, supports the Bireuen regional elections without money politics and continues to encourage the community to fight against and arrest perpetrators of money politics. This member of Commission V of the Indonesian House of Representatives has even promised to give umrah tickets or up to Rp 50 million to residents who are willing to arrest and testify against perpetrators of money politics in Bireuen Regency. A reward of Rp 50 million or an umrah ticket is offered to the public who dare to apprehend and testify against perpetrators of corrupt politics. This is for the better future of Bireuen and to erase the label of Bireuen as the 'city of a hundred thousand.' Do not let dirty politics destroy the hopes of Bireuen's people; anyone who is worthy can become a leader and bring progress to Bireuen's people and Islamic values (Serambinews, 2024).

After Bireuen regional elections in 2017, many people referred to the district as '100,000' due to the massive phenomenon of money politics that occurred ahead of the

2017 elections. 000 (one hundred thousand) due to the widespread occurrence of political corruption leading up to the 2017 local elections. In fact, news of political corruption in Bireuen during the 2017 local elections spread rapidly throughout Aceh. Discussions about political corruption in the 2017 local elections were not only among the general public but also among the election participants. Money politics is not a new phenomenon in Bireuen's democratic process. As far as the researcher's observations go, no candidate pair has been disqualified due to money politics, let alone had their victory revoked.

There are many ways to minimise money politics in Bireuen ahead of the 2024 regional elections. Election organisers can collaborate with independent election monitoring institutions, both from community organisations and academic monitoring institutions, comprehensive education to increase public participation in oversight functions, enhance oversight through accurate and transparent prevention and enforcement measures, and strengthen the control system in uncovering money politics cases through structured, systematic, and integrated oversight, as well as improving institutional synergy related to cooperation among the Election Organising Committee (Kelompok Penyelenggara Pemungutan Suara, KPPS), Election Committee (Panitia Pemungutan Suara, PPS), Sub-District Election Committee (PPK), Independent Election Commission (Komisi Independen Pemilihan, KIP) and Village Election Supervisors (Pengawas Pemilu Gampong/Desa, PPG), Sub-District Election Supervisory Committee (Panitia Pengawas Pemilihan Kecamatan, PANWASCAM), Election Supervisory Committee (Panitia Pengawas Pemilihan Panwaslih), as well as optimising the use of integrated law enforcement centres (penegakan hukum terpadu, gakkumdu).

Establishment of Anti-Corruption and Anti-Money Politics Villages in Bireuen Regency

Villages are the smallest administrative units that play an important role in community development and service delivery. In the context of decentralisation, villages are granted considerable authority through Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages (Pamungkas, 2019; Irawati, 2021; Timotius, 2018). However, this authority is often abused for personal gain, including corruption and money politics, particularly in the process of electing village heads or managing village funds.

The government has made various efforts to foster community development and build a democracy with integrity. Bireuen Regency, as one of the regions in Aceh, faces

this issue. Based on reports from various parties, corruption of village funds and money politics in village head elections have become significant issues. Therefore, concrete steps are needed to establish a community-based prevention and oversight system. One such initiative has been undertaken by the Bireuen District Prosecutor's Office. The Bireuen District Prosecutor's Office has established 17 anti-corruption villages as part of its efforts to enhance community participation in monitoring development and the management of village funds. This initiative has been ongoing for the past two years and is part of the 'Prosecutor's Village Guard Programme,' instructed by the Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia. The latest village to be launched as an anti-money politics village is Simpang Mulia Village. The 17 Anti-Corruption and Anti-Money Politics Villages in Bireuen District are as follows:

Anti-Corruption Alert Villages:

1. Geulanggang Gampong,
2. Meunasah Reuleut,
3. Cot Jrat,
4. Cot Unoe,
5. Lampoh Rayeuk,
6. Pulo Drien,
7. Geulanggang Kulam,
8. Simpang Jaya
9. Meunasah Capa
10. Geulanggang Baro
11. Garot
12. Buket Teukueh
13. Juli Uruek Anoe
14. Beurawang

Anti-Money Politic Village :

1. Juli Uruek Anoe
2. Beurawang
3. Simpang Mulia

Regarding the establishment of anti-corruption villages and anti-money politics villages, have they been successful in reducing money politics and maintaining democracy in Bireuen Regency to be more integrity-driven? Of course, this difficult

question cannot be answered easily or simply. This is because, as of 27 November 2024 when the local elections were held, money politics in Bireuen Regency still persisted, with evidence of arrests of suspects involved in money politics. Despite this fact, from a procedural standpoint and in terms of government efforts and community involvement in combating money politics and building an integrity-based democracy in Bireuen Regency, there have been concrete actions taken. However, regarding whether the results of these efforts are effective and efficient, this requires different benchmarks and a more detailed discussion.

The establishment of Anti-Corruption and Anti-Money Politics Villages in Bireuen District is a strategic step towards creating clean and integrity-driven village governance. Despite facing various challenges, this initiative holds great potential if supported by appropriate policies, community participation, and technology. With the collective commitment of all parties, villages in Bireuen Regency can serve as a model for other regions in building a society free from corruption and money politics. However, the painful reality is that the label of '*Kabupaten Rp 100,000*' (district Rp 100.000) remains difficult to shake off, as proven practices continue to recur. Based on the Clientelism Theory explained earlier, the practice of money politics has become a reciprocal relationship between patron and client. The regent or governor candidate will give something to the community, and then the community must reciprocate by voting for the candidate. However, this practice is being jointly eradicated from strategic movements in Bireuen.

Community Perspectives on Integrity-Based Democracy in Bireuen Regency

Democracy is an ideal system that can accommodate the aspirations of the people. However, this ideal democracy has been distorted since the implementation of the election process, post-election, and the work programmes of the election winners. Hans Kelsen explains that the principle of representation that should be applied focuses on accountability to voters. All elected parties should be accountable to those who voted for them (the people). Accountability is not to the political party or political funding supporters.

Based on the results of discussions in focus group discussions involving a number of strategic parties in Bireuen Regency, ranging from the community, academics, to the government, several broad outlines related to integrity democracy in Bireuen Regency

were identified. Responsibility for integrity democracy in Bireuen Regency lies with the government, candidate pairs, and the community.

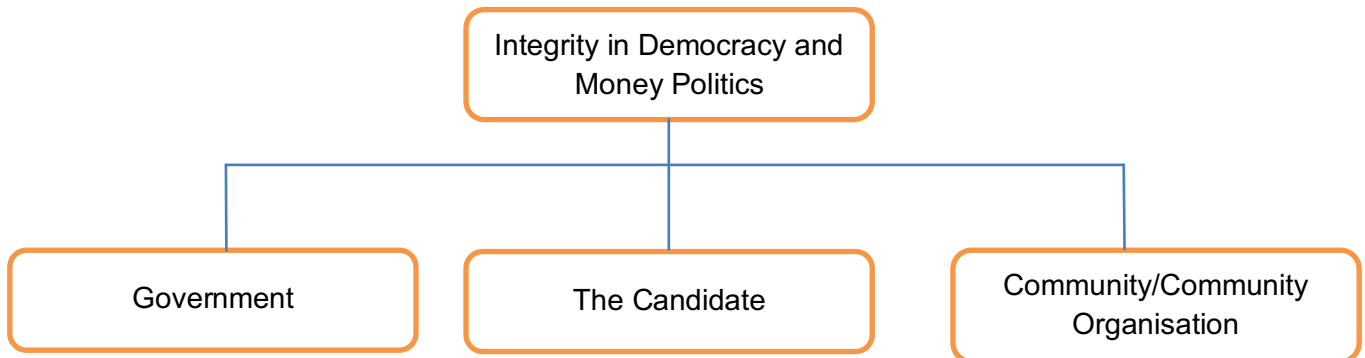


Figure 1. Responsible for Integrity in Democracy and Money Politics

The three parties mentioned above each have their own roles and significance in maintaining the quality of democracy in Bireuen. The first party is the government. The government is the party with the most extensive access in the field of election implementation, from planning to the post-election stage. The efforts that can be made by the government are more mobile than those of other parties, including in policy formulation, implementation, supervision, and handling of post-election issues.

The next party is the candidates participating in the democratic process. The implementation of democracy varies from country to country. In Indonesia, democracy has its own unique characteristics, including specific terms that involve candidates, such as ‘dawn raid’ and ‘political costs.’ Political ethics play a dominant role in maintaining the integrity of democracy among candidates. However, to ensure victory in elections, these ethical considerations are often set aside and only emphasised during campaign rallies.

The community, as a vital element in democracy, is often understood to have different positions. Sometimes it is seen as the main actor, but often it is also seen as a victim in the democratic process. This misunderstanding arises because political education and political awareness of implementation are not fully and substantively understood by the public. Democracy in Indonesia is only implemented as a procedural practice, and it is in this position that the public becomes a target for exploitation by corrupt individuals in the implementation of democracy.



Figure 2. Solutions for Combating Money Politics and Promoting Integrity in Democracy

Based on a questionnaire distributed to all FGD participants, there are several detailed solutions provided in terms of combating money politics and building an integrity-based democracy in Bireuen District. Bireuen District can serve as a model for the implementation of democracy and money politics practices in Aceh. There is a perception among the Acehnese community that politics in Aceh is good if politics in Bireuen is good. However, the reality is that the pattern of democracy sponsored by money politics remains a major concern for the community in Bireuen District. As of the 2024 local elections, money politics practices are still widely prevalent. If we use the premise we previously illustrated, it can be concluded that the implementation of money politics remains widespread, and democracy in Aceh has not yet achieved integrity.

The community's demands for improvements in the future include addressing several key aspects of democratic implementation in Aceh, such as imposing strict sanctions on those involved in money politics, committing to enforcing the law as agreed, ensuring media neutrality, providing political education, establishing transparent procedures, and creating platforms for the community to participate actively and safely without intimidation when voicing concerns or presenting evidence of violations. These

ideas represent the final efforts of the people of Bireuen District to improve the nation's condition and ensure that the hope for the implementation of an integrity-based democracy free from political corruption practices can be realised for the welfare of the entire nation.

CONCLUSION

The government and election organizers have implemented various measures to prevent money politics in Bireuen from recurring, as occurred in the 2017 elections. Among these measures, the Election Commission (KIP) and the Election Supervisory Board (Panwaslih) have conducted awareness campaigns about the consequences of money politics. the Bireuen Prosecutor's Office has also conducted awareness campaigns and enforced criminal penalties against those involved in political corruption, while members of Commission V of the House of Representatives (DPR) from Aceh's second electoral district have offered rewards to anyone who can uncover cases of political corruption. All of these efforts are being made by the government and election authorities to ensure the creation of an integrity-based democracy free from political corruption in Bireuen.

Responsibility for addressing political corruption and ensuring an integrity-based democracy does not rest solely with the government but also with political candidates and the public, who play a significant role in the implementation of democracy in Indonesia. This is particularly true for Aceh Province, especially Bireuen District, which has a poor track record in maintaining democratic integrity. Recommendations that can be made through this research include improvements and commitments from all parties, especially the government, which must be able to create concrete policies with significant impacts on improving the implementation of democracy in Indonesia in general, and specifically in the Aceh Province. Additionally, the government must also conduct evaluations of the efforts that have been made to determine whether these efforts are effective and efficient.

The fight against money politics is not an easy task, given that all parties involved in this democratic contest are trying to secure their own interests. However, the highest interest is that of the general public, who will ultimately feel the impact of a democratic process that leads to prosperity and welfare.

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