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Awareness and Political Participation of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang Students Regarding Money Politics in General Elections

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ABSTRACT

Students represent a significant segment of new voters in General Election contests. As newcomers to the electorate, students must develop a thorough understanding of political awareness and participation in elections. This study aims to examine students' comprehension of political awareness and their engagement with money politics, as well as the impact of such practices on elections. Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods, data were collected through surveys and in-depth interviews with 30 students. The findings reveal diverse levels of political awareness, shaped by factors including education, information access, social environment, and political experience. While most students demonstrate a solid understanding of money politics and express negative attitudes towards it, some encounter moral dilemmas. Economic background, education, and political experience significantly affect their views on money politics. This practice also influences their political participation by diminishing trust in the political system and reducing their motivation to engage. These results underscore the necessity of enhancing political awareness and addressing money politics among students to fortify democratic processes.

Keywords: Political Awareness; Student Participation; Money Politics

ABSTRAK

Mahasiswa merupakan kelompok penting dari pemilih baru dalam konteks Pemilihan Umum. Sebagai peserta baru dalam proses pemilihan, penting bagi mahasiswa untuk mengembangkan pemahaman yang komprehensif mengenai kesadaran politik dan partisipasi pemilihan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki pemahaman mahasiswa tentang kesadaran politik serta keterlibatan mereka dengan politik uang, serta implikasi praktik tersebut terhadap pemilihan. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui survei dan wawancara mendalam dengan 30 mahasiswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan variasi tingkat kesadaran politik yang dipengaruhi oleh faktor-faktor seperti pendidikan, akses informasi, konteks sosial, dan pengalaman politik. Meskipun mayoritas mahasiswa menunjukkan pemahaman yang baik tentang politik uang dan mengungkapkan sikap negatif terhadapnya, beberapa di antaranya menghadapi dilema etis. Faktor-faktor seperti latar belakang ekonomi, pencapaian pendidikan, dan pengalaman politik secara signifikan membentuk pandangan

mereka terhadap politik uang. Praktik ini juga mempengaruhi keterlibatan politik mereka dengan mengikis kepercayaan terhadap sistem politik dan mengurangi motivasi untuk berpartisipasi. Temuan ini menyoroti perlunya meningkatkan kesadaran politik dan menangani politik uang di kalangan mahasiswa untuk memperkuat praktik demokrasi.

Kata Kunci: Kesadaran Politik, Partisipasi Mahasiswa, Money Politic

INTRODUCTION

Political participation, etymologically derived from the Latin *pars*, meaning part, and *capere*, meaning to take, refers to engaging or involving oneself in activities. The Greek philosopher Aristotle discussed political participation within the context of community life, positing that the bonds between individuals are fundamental to the formation of a state (Nurhamin, 2015). According to Huntington and Joan Nelson, political participation encompasses a range of activities or actions that hold political relevance or influence governmental decision-making (Leo A, 2009).

Political participation is a crucial component of a democratic system, encompassing various citizen activities aimed at influencing political decisions and government policies. To measure political participation effectively, it is essential to examine citizen engagement in executive and legislative elections at both regional and national levels. This engagement serves as a foundation for community participation. Students, as a demographic within society, are often seen as potential change agents due to their active involvement in social and political movements (Nida Amalia Dewi & Dedi, 2022). With their high levels of knowledge and idealism, students have the potential to drive positive change in the democratic process. However, a significant challenge to democracy in Indonesia is the practice of money politics, which can undermine electoral integrity and diminish the quality of political participation. Political behavior encompasses the interactions between individuals and government entities in the context of making, implementing, and enforcing political decisions (Thomas Tokan, 2020).

State Islamic University (UIN) Raden Fatah Palembang, a prominent higher education institution in Indonesia, plays a strategic role in shaping its students' political awareness. This study aims to explore the political awareness and participation of students at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, focusing specifically on their perspectives on money politics and their contributions to elections.

Political awareness reflects an individual's understanding and concern for political issues and their willingness to engage in political activities. Factors such as education, social environment, and access to information influence students' political awareness. Students with high political awareness are typically more critical of government policies and more active in political participation at both the campus and national levels. Nonetheless, high political awareness does not necessarily shield students from the effects of money politics. Even informed and critical students may be influenced by unethical political practices if their surrounding environment supports or enables such behavior.

Money politics involves using financial or material incentives to influence political choices, commonly observed during elections when candidates or parties attempt to buy votes or sway election results. This practice poses a serious threat to the democratic process by undermining election integrity, reducing the quality of political

participation, and eroding public trust in the political system. Among students, money politics can diminish the idealism and integrity they are expected to uphold. It arises from candidates' obsession with winning elections through transactional means involving money or goods.

This study focuses on students at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, who, with their combination of religious and general education, are expected to reject money politics and promote honest and fair political participation. However, real-world conditions may differ. Understanding their perceptions and attitudes towards money politics and its impact on their electoral participation is crucial.

Political participation encompasses community actions that influence political decisions. Since community members best understand their own needs, their participation is vital in shaping government policies that address public interests (Leo Agustino, 2009). Students, as key societal elements, play a significant role in politics (Agents of Change). Their political participation can be measured through various activities, including political discussions, campaign attendance, election participation, and involvement in political organizations or social movements. This participation reflects their commitment to democracy and active engagement in political decision-making. By assessing the level of participation among UIN Raden Fatah Palembang students, we can gauge their contribution to strengthening democracy in Indonesia.

Additionally, this study examines factors influencing students' political awareness and participation, such as educational background, access to political information, peer influence, and family and community environment. Understanding these factors can aid in designing effective political education programs and strategies to enhance healthy political participation among students. This research employs qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews and surveys, to gather data from UIN Raden Fatah Palembang students. This approach provides a comprehensive view of students' attitudes towards money politics and their forms of political participation. The data will be analyzed to identify patterns and trends, offering recommendations for policymakers. Globally, money politics is a common challenge, with many countries facing similar issues in maintaining electoral integrity and strengthening democratic processes (Istiqomah & Harisudin, 2021). Therefore, this study's findings may contribute to international discussions on combating money politics and promoting healthy political participation.

At the national level, the results are expected to inform government, educational institutions, and civil society organizations in developing programs to enhance political awareness and student participation. These programs could include formal political education on campus, anti-money politics campaigns, and leadership training for students. Such initiatives aim to prepare students to become future leaders with high integrity and commitment to democratic values. High political awareness among students is crucial not only for elections but for overall political life. Politically aware students are generally more critical of public policies, more active in advocating for social issues, and more committed to participating in decision-making processes at various levels. Therefore, increasing political awareness and student participation can positively impact the quality of democracy in Indonesia. If left unaddressed, money politics can undermine efforts to foster healthy political participation. Thus, it is essential to develop a comprehensive strategy to combat money politics, including strict law enforcement, public education, and increased transparency in the election process (Ardipandanto,

2015). In this context, students play a vital role as change agents in leading anti-money politics movements and promoting cleaner and more transparent political participation. Overall, this study aims to provide a thorough understanding of the political awareness and participation of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang students, focusing on their views on money politics. By exploring factors influencing their attitudes and participation, this study seeks to offer valuable recommendations for enhancing democracy in Indonesia and developing more effective political education programs to mitigate money politics among young voters.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review on the topic of money politics for university students typically involves a comprehensive analysis of existing research and scholarly works related to the influence of money in political processes. Begin by explaining what money politics entails, particularly in the context of political campaigns, elections, and policy-making. Define key terms such as "money politics," "political corruption," "campaign finance," and "vote-buying." Highlight the importance of understanding this topic, especially for students who might be future leaders, policymakers, or activists.

Edward Aspinall explains that based on intensive field research conducted in twenty regions during the 2014 Legislative Election (Pileg), his study addresses various questions related to this phenomenon. Unlike most studies on elections in Indonesia, which have predominantly focused on the patterns and trends of political party performance at the national level (e.g., Ananta, Arifin, and Suryadinata 2004; King 2003; Mujani, Liddle, and Ambardi 2012; Mietzner 2013), this study seeks to examine how elections function at the grassroots level. Therefore, this study attempts to explore the close relationships between candidates, campaign activists, and voters, from the provincial and district/city levels down to the smallest neighborhoods at the village level.

Many observers believe that the 2014 Legislative Election was rife with money politics. Jimly Asshidiqie, the Chairman of the Election Organizer Honorary Council (DKPP), described the practice of money politics in the 2014 Legislative Election as the most 'widespread' in the history of elections in Indonesia (detiknews.com, April 17, 2014). An analyst from Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) also deemed the 2014 Legislative Election as the most 'brutal' (Pikiran Rakyat, May 14, 2014). A politician from the Golkar Party did not deny this view and even added that 'At present, money politics is more open and no longer hidden as it was in the past' (Media Indonesia, April 22, 2014). Meanwhile, an Islamic leader referred to the 2014 Legislative Election as a 'capitalist, cannibalistic, and corrupt' election (Waspada, May 7, 2014).

METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research techniques, to investigate the political awareness and participation of students at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang with respect to money politics and their contributions to elections. This methodological framework facilitates a thorough and nuanced exploration of the phenomena under investigation.

The study's population comprises all active students at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. To ensure a representative sample, a stratified random sampling technique was employed, drawing participants from various faculties to capture a diverse and

representative data set. A total of 30 students were selected as samples, providing a sufficient basis for an accurate depiction of the population. Data collection involved two primary methods: surveys and in-depth interviews. The survey utilized a structured questionnaire aimed at assessing students' political awareness, attitudes toward money politics, and their forms of political participation. This questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions to capture a range of responses. The distribution of the questionnaire occurred both in person and via online platforms to maximize reach and response rates.

In-depth interviews were conducted to gain a deeper insight into students' perspectives and experiences related to money politics and electoral participation. These interviews were carried out with a purposively selected group of students based on initial survey results. The interviews focused on exploring students' motivations, perceptions, and experiences concerning politics and elections, and their reactions to money politics. Quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize frequency distributions, means, and percentages of the variables under study, while inferential techniques, such as correlation and regression analysis, were used to examine the relationships between political awareness, attitudes toward money politics, and political participation.

Qualitative data from the in-depth interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis. This process involved transcribing interviews, coding data, identifying key themes, and interpreting findings. Thematic analysis enabled the identification of recurring patterns and a deeper understanding of students' viewpoints and experiences.

Ethical considerations were rigorously adhered to throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, with students receiving clear information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants. All data were kept confidential and used exclusively for research purposes.

Overall, this methodological approach aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the political awareness and participation of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang students, along with their attitudes towards money politics. The study's findings are anticipated to contribute significantly to enhancing the quality of democracy in Indonesia, particularly among the younger generation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Political Awareness and Participation Among Students: An Analysis of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang

Political awareness can be dissected into two distinct concepts: "awareness" and "politics." Awareness refers to an understanding of events, while politics involves efforts to create a more organized and improved society. Therefore, when combined, political awareness signifies an understanding of how to achieve a better and more organized society (Tunggal, 2023). In the context of students, political awareness is a crucial measure of both their political participation quality and their comprehension of the democratic process. This awareness encompasses not only knowledge of political issues but also an active willingness to engage in political activities, both on campus and during national elections. At UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, gauging student political awareness

is essential for evaluating their potential as agents of change who can foster a healthier and more cohesive democracy.

The study indicates that political awareness among UIN Raden Fatah Palembang students varies, influenced by key factors such as educational background, access to information, social environment, and personal political experience. Analysis of survey data and in-depth interviews reveals several significant findings:

1. Educational Background

Higher education institutions play a critical role in shaping political education for the younger generation. The content and structure of academic programs significantly influence students' political sensitivity and knowledge. Students majoring in social and political sciences, such as Political Science, Law, and Communication, generally exhibit higher levels of political awareness compared to those in scientific or engineering disciplines. This is due to the curriculum's focus on political, legal, and public policy issues, which promotes critical analysis and discussion. Interviews with students revealed that coursework on political systems, democratic theory, and political ethics significantly enhanced their understanding of Indonesian politics. For instance, a Law student noted that discussions on corruption and money politics highlighted the importance of integrity and the detrimental effects of corrupt practices on democracy (Prayugo, 2022).

2. Access to Information

Access to political information is a crucial factor in shaping students' political awareness. Students who actively follow political news through various media channels, including television, radio, and online platforms, tend to have a higher level of political awareness. The majority of students rely on social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook for political updates. Despite concerns about information validity and bias, social media offers widespread and rapid information dissemination. Additionally, independent news sites and online discussion forums contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of political issues.

3. Social Environment

The social environment, encompassing family, peers, and student organizations, significantly impacts students' political awareness. Informal discussions about political matters with friends and family enhance understanding and interest in politics. Students involved in organizations such as the Student Executive Board (BEM) or political discussion groups typically exhibit higher political awareness due to their engagement in politically relevant activities. Interviews revealed that participation in these organizations provides valuable opportunities to develop practical political skills and engage in seminars and workshops on current issues.

4. Personal Experience

Personal experiences with political activities, such as volunteering for campaigns or participating in campus elections, also contribute to heightened political awareness. Students who have been directly involved in these activities generally demonstrate a better understanding of the political process and show greater enthusiasm for electoral participation. Some students shared their experiences as campaign volunteers, noting how these experiences illuminated the challenges of maintaining political integrity and the importance of transparency in elections.

Survey results indicated that while most students possess a fundamental understanding of political issues, there are notable differences in their levels of interest and active participation. Approximately 60% of students reported regularly following political news and having a basic grasp of the Indonesian political system. However, only about 35% were actively involved in campus or community political activities, highlighting a gap between political knowledge and active engagement. This disparity may be attributed to factors such as time constraints, distrust in the political system, or negative perceptions of political involvement.

Students with high political awareness generally have broad access to political information, relevant educational backgrounds, supportive social environments, and personal political experiences. To enhance overall political awareness, collaborative efforts from educational institutions, media, student organizations, and the community are necessary. Educational institutions should strengthen political education curricula and offer more opportunities for political engagement. The media must continue to provide accurate and unbiased information and promote healthy public debate. Student organizations can facilitate political discussions and provide platforms for active participation. Lastly, families and social circles should support open political discourse and encourage youth involvement in the political process. Increasing political awareness among students is expected to enhance their participation in elections and contribute to reducing money politics.

Perceptions of Money Politics Among UIN Raden Fatah Palembang Students

Money politics poses a significant challenge to maintaining election integrity in Indonesia. It involves using money or material incentives to influence electoral choices, which undermines the democratic process, diminishes the quality of political participation, and erodes public trust in the political system (Jamaludin & Abdillah, 2023). Money politics typically includes direct material offers or promises of rewards to sway voter preferences (Azwar, 2014). Understanding student perceptions of money politics is crucial for preventing its impact and ensuring fair elections. Students play a vital role in combating money politics by advocating for a transparent and ethical democratic system (Amatahir, 2023).

The study found that most students at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang possess a relatively strong understanding of money politics and its negative effects on the democratic process. Approximately 85% of respondents recognized money politics as an unethical practice that harms election integrity and leadership quality.

Students are aware that money politics can manifest in various forms, including cash payments, material gifts, or promises of employment opportunities. They recognize that such practices occur at both local and national levels and involve candidates attempting to secure votes through dishonest means. Despite this awareness, attitudes towards money politics among students vary. About 70% of students hold a negative view of money politics, considering it a serious threat to democracy. They emphasize the need for elections to be based on candidates' vision and policies rather than financial incentives.

Conversely, approximately 20% of students display a more ambivalent attitude. While they acknowledge the wrongdoing of money politics, some express skepticism about the potential for systemic change. Economic pressures may sometimes lead them to accept incentives despite their idealistic views. This ambivalence reflects a distrust of the political system and uncertainty about individual capacity to effect change.

Personal experiences with money politics also vary among students. Around 30% of respondents reported being offered money or incentives in exchange for votes. While most declined these offers, some accepted them due to economic constraints. Students who have faced such dilemmas often experience guilt and regret, hoping for future improvements in the political system to avoid similar situations.

Factors influencing perceptions of money politics include economic background, education, and political experience. Students from lower economic backgrounds are more susceptible to offers of money politics due to financial pressures, whereas those from better economic circumstances are generally more resistant to such practices. Education enhances students' critical understanding of money politics and helps them uphold democratic values. Political experience, such as involvement in campaigns or student organizations, also contributes to a more negative perception of money politics, highlighting the need for integrity in the electoral process.

Addressing the impact of money politics on students' perceptions and participation involves enhancing political education, increasing transparency and accountability in elections, and encouraging student involvement in anti-money politics initiatives. Collaborative efforts are essential to restore and strengthen student political participation, drive positive societal change, and promote democratic values.

Impact of Money Politics on Student Political Participation

Money politics not only affects election integrity but also influences student political participation at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. Political participation encompasses various activities, from voting to advocacy and social movements. Money politics can diminish student engagement in several significant ways (Muhamad Fariz, 2021).

A primary effect of money politics is reduced trust in the political system. Exposure to corrupt practices can lead to disappointment and frustration, diminishing students' motivation to participate in political activities. This decreased trust may foster skepticism and apathy, leading students to feel their involvement has little impact and potentially opting out of voting or political engagement (Simamora, 2011). This disengagement can undermine the quality of political participation and hinder efforts for societal improvement.

Money politics can also decrease active participation in elections. Students who perceive elections as unfair or tainted by unethical practices may be less inclined to vote or participate in campaigns. This reduction in voter turnout can affect the legitimacy of election results and the quality of political representation.

Furthermore, money politics can divert students' focus from critical issues, such as student welfare or environmental concerns, toward discussions of campaign finances and candidate selection based on material rewards. This shift can impede students' ability to address substantive societal issues and disrupt the political agenda.

The practice of money politics can also impact students' perceptions of leadership and representation. Leaders elected through dishonest means may be viewed with skepticism, undermining trust and legitimacy in political institutions. This skepticism can lead to passive or oppositional attitudes, resulting in reduced cooperation and dialogue between students and government entities.

To counteract the negative effects of money politics on student participation, it is crucial to rebuild trust, motivation, and commitment to the political process. This includes enhancing awareness of electoral integrity, empowering students to participate

in anti-money politics movements, and improving transparency and accountability in the political system. Through these comprehensive efforts, student political participation can be revitalized, fostering positive societal change and strengthening democratic values.

CONCLUSION

Research into the political awareness of students at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang indicates that their level of political awareness is significantly shaped by several factors: educational background, access to information, social environment, and personal experience. Students pursuing degrees in social and political sciences generally exhibit higher levels of political awareness compared to those in other fields. The role of information access, through both mass media and social media, is crucial in shaping political awareness, though concerns about the credibility and bias of such information persist. Additionally, the social environment, including discussions with peers and family, as well as active participation in student organizations, enhances students' understanding and engagement with political issues. Students actively involved in campus or community political activities tend to demonstrate higher political awareness and a stronger commitment to integrity and transparency in politics. Despite having a satisfactory level of political knowledge, their actual participation in political activities remains low, reflecting challenges such as mistrust in the political system and economic constraints.

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