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## Destruction Democracy Through Determinants of Vote Buying in General Elections in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** Vote buying is a corrupt practice that undermines the integrity of democratic elections. This involves the exchange of money, goods, or services for votes, which may result in the election of candidates who are unqualified or do not represent the interests of the people. In analyzing the destruction of democracy, political culture, morals and political ethics through the factors that determine the occurrence of vote buying and selling in elections in Indonesia, this article uses a literature study method with a qualitative descriptive research type. Through analysis, Rational Choice Theory will dissect and examine the destruction of democracy, political culture, morals and political ethics through the factors that determine the occurrence of vote buying and selling in elections in Indonesia. this research concludes (1) The practice of buying and selling votes in elections in Indonesia has become a serious problem in democratic development. This happens because of the desire to win the election by any means, including by giving money or goods to voters to vote for a particular candidate. (2) A political culture imbued with repeated acts of buying and selling votes makes these illegal interactions common. The main goal is to make a large number of voters understand the act of voting with certain benefits as an opportunity for charitable people. (3) On the one hand, it can increase political participation for incentive recipients. On the other hand, this can damage trust and reduce participation by parties who view it as a corrupt practice that undermines morals and political ethics.

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## I. Introduction

Vote buying has always been an ulcer (problem) and is a major factor in the high political costs of implementing general elections in Indonesia and this problem has never been resolved despite the regulations and penalties regarding the practice of vote buying. Various previous studies also contributed to providing solutions to the practice of vote buying but did not fully influence this activity. So what is the basis for the practice of vote buying? how does vote buying occur? what system is damaged? what is the right formulation to minimize this form of electoral malpractice? The high political costs can be caused by various factors, one of which is vote buying. The intersection point of the relationship between Vote Buying and the high cost of politics lies in the Political Budget Cycle. Vote Buying is often accompanied by a political budget cycle. This cycle involves the allocation of large amounts of resources by candidates and political parties, usually just before an election is held. These resources are used to fund pre-election transfers that are part of the vote buying strategy (Hanusch et al., 2014).

Vote buying is a type of political transaction in which various types of materials, including cash, services, and goods are exchanged for political support from voters (Canare et al., 2018a) (Sumantri & Suryanto, 2020); (Oladapo et al., 2020). This phenomenon often occurs during elections in developing countries (Guerra & Justesen, 2022); (Nwagwu et al., 2022).

The poverty factor is often associated with vote buying transactions, poverty is the cause of inequality, social injustice, conflict, crime, and political apathy so that it is very easy for voters to sell their votes (Diokno-Sicat & Maddawin, 2018); (Pradhanawati et al., 2019); (Adamu et al., 2022); (Justesen & Manzetti, 2023). The poverty rate in Indonesia, as of September 2022, was recorded at 9.57% or as many as 26.36 million people below the poverty line. This poverty rate increased slightly from March 2022 (9.54%) but lower than the poverty rate in September 2021 (9.71%) (BKF, 2023).

The issue of poverty is still seen as the most effective political topic in the candidate's campaign manifesto because this issue is felt

directly by the people. The problem of poverty is one of the factors in the practice of transactional politics in Indonesia, especially in political years (Aidt et al., 2019); (Chalil, 2019); (Solihah, 2022). The question arises as to whether only poor people are likely to get vote buying. There are several variables that can explain such as patron-client relationships or unrelated family relationships based on poverty.

Its development begins with oligarchic politics, which is followed by the operation of a predatory power network, namely the existence of political-business groups that use state power to accumulate individual wealth, influence patronage relationships of economic and political elites including vote-buying (Ananta, 2017); (Sahdan, 2019); (Israel & John, 2020). Because of this, the candidate considers political expenses to be insufficient to cover basic needs rather than mere campaign activities. Therefore, illegally, candidates take advantage of financial relationships and ownership of the results of fundraising from business donors. Business owners who make such donations often want special treatment or special benefits from their chosen candidate. Thus, the selected candidate only serves the interests of the donor (business) in the future and does not serve the constituents who have already voted. Violations of campaign finance regulations often go undetected, and when violations are detected, they often go unpunished, creating a cycle that perpetuates the dependency of donors from businesses and candidates (Joseph & Vashchanka, 2022).

Vote buying, bribery, fraud and collection of financial resources through illegal means have been prominent in electoral contests when Indonesia began to move towards democracy and decentralization practices, it is known that the vote buying rate in Indonesia (26%) has almost doubled the Asian average (14%) (Transparency International Indonesia, 2020). The electoral arena is marked by the misuse of public funds and state institutions that only serve the interests of predatory alliances. A large majority of experts (71%) estimated that over 60% of voters received monetary incentives during parliamentary elections (Berenschot, 2018). This network more broadly that connects members of dirty academics, predatory political and economic elites appear and are active in

various cases to manipulate the electoral process through Vote Buying. But on the other hand, this network conveys good ideas openly regarding government reform in the Neo-institutionalist concept (Kusman, 2018).

Another frequent factor is patronage networks and clientelism. Patronage networks and clientelism refer to the practice of exchanging political support and favors for personal gain, such as money, jobs, or other benefits. These networks are often used to secure votes during elections, and can be a determining factor in a candidate's victory. This practice often occurs in many elections, including the regional elections in Indonesia (Haridison, 2021); (Shchukin & Arbatli, 2022); (Peterlevitz et al., 2022). Parties seek to attract electoral support by programmatic promises (public goods, services) in the interests of all citizens as well as the redistribution that occurs across countries, broadly referred to as "clientelism linkages." Cash, gifts and non-material goods such as jobs, exclusive access to public services are forms of clientelism (Siregar & Maryanah, 2022; Jati, 2022).

More specifically, Putra's 2017 article entitled "Determinants of Vote Buying in Local Head Elections in Indonesia" reveals that education is a very significant factor in buying and selling votes. Voters with higher education (college or university graduates) are much less likely to consider money or prizes. This study found another interesting finding that gender has an effect on vote buying in Indonesia. Female voters tend to consider money or gifts more than men. Voters who live in rural areas have a higher probability of considering vote buying. Then, having internet access can reduce the possibility of vote buying. High social awareness makes voters less vulnerable to vote buying than voters who live in communities with less social awareness (Putra, 2017).

Vote buying and selling transactions in elections have a negative impact. The embryo of vote buying will become an obstacle to the development of democracy. Vote buying is a practice that endangers the electoral process and undermines democracy. The negative implications for democracy can be: (a). Undermines free and fair elections, Vote buying distorts the principle of free and fair elections by manipulating the results through the exchange of money or goods

for votes (Adegbami & Makinde, 2018). This undermines the integrity of the electoral process and erodes public confidence in the democratic system. (b) Reduces the value of an individual vote buying reduces the value of an individual vote by turning it into a commodity that can be bought and sold. This undermines the notion that every citizen's vote should carry equal weight and influence in shaping election results (c). Resulting in the election of an ineligible candidate. When votes are bought, it often results in the election of a candidate who may not be the most qualified or capable of serving the public interest. In contrast, candidates who are able to buy votes can gain power, regardless of competence or fitness for office. (d). Perpetuating corruption, Vote buying is a form of corruption that perpetuates a culture of bribery and unethical behavior in politics (Ejue et al., 2018; Ebenger & McCabe, 2019; Ranggong et al., 2023).

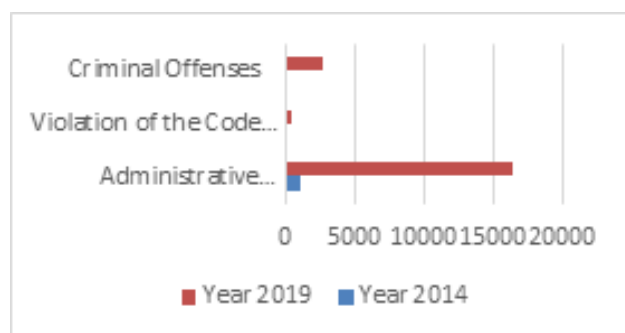
This creates a system where politicians rely on illicit means to gain and maintain power, rather than focusing on serving the needs and interests of the people. (e). Damaging democratic values, Democracy is built on the principles of equality, transparency and accountability. Vote buying undermines these values by introducing inequality, secrecy, and a lack of accountability into the electoral process. This erodes the foundations of democracy and undermines the legitimacy of elected governments (Komisi Yudisial Republik Indonesia, 2019; Fernandes et al., 2019; Amalia et al., 2021; Halida et al., 2022). (f). Another impact of buying and selling votes is that it can erode confidence in the electoral process. When voters believe that elections are being manipulated through vote buying, candidates may lose faith in the democratic process (Hamson, 2021). This can lead to reduced turnout and lack of participation in the political process, which can further undermine democratic development.

In Indonesia, the development of democracy is hampered by the rise of money politics, including buying and selling votes. The practice of buying and selling votes endangers the integrity of elections and can result in contamination of the electoral process (Djuyandi et al., 2023; Siregar & Maryanah, 2022). Vote buying is a common form of electoral malpractice in many countries, including India, Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon and Thailand (Paalo & van Gyampo, 2019; Still & Dusi,

2020). Election Malpractice has been described by Sarah Birch who includes Vote Buying as a Sub-Indicator of one of the main indicators of Election Malpractice, namely Voter Manipulation related to Voting Preferences. The parameters of the statement are (a). Election participants give a certain amount of money or goods to voters. (b). Voters receive certain gifts from prospective candidates or other parties (Karim, 2020).

In a previous article by Burhanudin Muhtadi in 2019 in his book entitled "Vote Buying di Indonesia (The Mechanics of Electoral Bribery)" revealed that in a comparative study of general elections, discussion of the determinants of vote buying at the individual level usually focuses on the issue of target selection. In the context of candidate-centered elections, individual popularity is a key determinant of electoral success for candidates. To strengthen this, the candidate ignores the importance of conventional campaign tools such as direct contact with voters outside the campaign room and personal strategies such as buying votes (Muhtadi, 2019)

The proportion of voters who accept money politics in the 2019 election is 19.4-33.1 percent. The spectrum of money politics is very broad in international comparisons and makes Indonesia's money politics the third largest in the world (Muhtadi, 2019).



Source: Bawaslu 2014 & 2019

Figure 1. Graph of election violations comparison in 2014 and 2019

There was an increase in election violations from 2014 to 2019 (Bawaslu RI., 2014);(Bawaslu RI., 2019) as many as 16,134 administrative violations, 373 code of ethics violations, and 582 criminal violations in 2019, while in 2014

the results of Bawaslu's supervision of the two aspects found a total of 1,332 election violations with details: 1,142 administrative violations, 81 violations criminal and 21 violations of the code of ethics. It was added that in 2020 Bawaslu collected data on the handling of alleged money politics violations totaling 262 cases which were included in the review and investigation stage, which were sourced from 197 public reports and 65 cases were Bawaslu findings (Ardianto, 2020).

Quoted from Databoks Katadata (Bayu, 2021), LSI noted that 21.9% of respondents in the 2020 Pilkada areas had once or twice been offered money or goods to vote for a particular candidate for governor. Then, 4.7% of respondents admitted that they had been offered money or goods several times to vote for a certain candidate for governor. As many as 22.7% of respondents in the 2020 regional election areas admitted that they had been offered money or goods to elect a particular candidate for regent/mayor. There were 5.7% of respondents who admitted that they had been offered money or goods several times to vote for a particular candidate for regent/mayor.

This category is included in the terminology of political corruption because in the electoral process the practice of vote buying is inherent with the main objective of getting the most votes and winning the election, the practice of buying and selling votes involving election participants (political parties/candidates) with voters is categorized as a form of bribery against voters or electoral bribery (Husin et al., 2021).

The description above has explained how the practice of vote-buying becomes a determinant that can broadly cause bias and damage to democratic identity, political culture, morals, and political ethics in Indonesia (Suprpto & Lukiawan, 2017). Threats of sanctions in Article 187A of Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 10 of 2016 and Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 of Article 523 of Law No. 7 of 2017, and approaches to solving this problem such as political education, are still difficult to eliminate. Some of the causes are limited regulations, weak enforcement of regulations, and low political will of stakeholders in prioritizing transparency and openness. Previous research still discusses in general terms the determination of vote-buying without linking



it to the fatal parts that will be damaged in the nation's political identity, as previously explained.

Therefore, this article will comprehensively discuss the destruction of democracy, political culture, morals, and political ethics through the determinants of vote-buying in general elections in Indonesia using the Rational Choice Theory approach. This theory is used as a basis for studying social dilemmas and collective action. Rational Choice Theory provides a framework for understanding individual decision-making, including in the context of vote-buying and its impact on political costs. According to this theory, individuals weigh the costs and benefits of their actions and make rational choices to maximize their own self-interest. In the context of vote-buying, politicians may engage in this practice as a rational strategy to secure electoral support. They may perceive the benefits of winning an election, gaining power, and accessing resources to outweigh the potential costs of engaging in illegal or unethical behavior. From the perspective of the voter, accepting a bribe may be seen as a rational choice if the immediate benefit of the payment is perceived to outweigh the potential long-term costs to the political system. The determining factor in high political costs arises from the broader implications of vote-buying. When vote-buying is prevalent, it can undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process, weaken democratic institutions, and perpetuate corruption. This can lead to higher political costs in the form of reduced trust in government, social unrest, and economic inefficiency. This theory assumes that individuals make decisions based on their own interests and that voters have complete information about the choices available to them, which creates a relationship between the interpretation of prices and tastes. The interpretation of prices and tastes suggests that changes in behavior are explained by constraints ("prices") rather than differences in intrinsic characteristics between human populations ("tastes") (Hudik, 2019).

## II. Methods

The method used to assist the authors in analyzing the destruction of democracy, political culture, morals, and political ethics through the determinants of vote-buying in general

elections in Indonesia uses a literature study with a descriptive qualitative research type. The method used is a literature study, collecting data by finding sources and constructing from various sources such as books, journals, and existing research. Therefore, qualitative research is carried out with a research design in which the findings are not obtained through procedures or in the form of calculations, but reveal holistic-contextual phenomena by collecting data from researchers in natural settings and using them as keys. Qualitative research is descriptive in nature and tends to use an inductive analysis approach, so that processes and meanings based on the subject's perspective are highlighted in this qualitative research. This qualitative research design can be used as a method in research because it is a comprehensive design and is easily accessible to academics and researchers (Adlini et al., 2022).

Conducting a literature review is a common way of using literature as a qualitative method that evaluates knowledge on a particular topic (Snyder H., 2019). Literature reviews can help researchers understand knowledge states, identify gaps, and inform research. When using literature as a qualitative method, the researcher can analyze and interpret the sources reviewed. This process helps researchers gain insight, identify patterns, and develop a deeper understanding of a topic. This allows researchers to identify historical patterns and make informed predictions about future developments.

According to Patton, this validity technique uses a triangulation technique (checking the validity of the data) which is divided into 4 types of triangulations in the validity of the data (Patton, 1999), including: 1. Data Triangulation: Researchers use data sources in the form of books, journals, and references from the internet on the Destruction of Democracy, Political Culture, Moral, and Political Ethics Through Determinants of Vote Buying in General Elections in Indonesia. 2. Observer Triangulation: The presence of observers as examiners and investigators of the results collected by researchers. 3. Theoretical Triangulation: Several theories are used to ensure that the data collected by researchers is appropriate. The theories used are Democratic Theory, Political Culture Theory, Political Ethics Theory, Political Moral Theory, and Vote Buying

Theory. 4. Method Triangulation: This is a triangulation technique using several methods for research. Because the article is based on research with a literature study, the method used is the document method. This is done for the validity of the data obtained by carrying out the appropriate data collection process from related journals, books, and articles. Then this process examines data obtained from various sources and references using various techniques and methods. Then, using techniques to check the correctness of data by using other instruments outside of the data to compare with the data obtained. It captures expressive and contextual information to gain a deeper understanding of phenomena (Busetto et al., 2020). The research was carried out for five months, from March 1, 2023, to July 31, 2023.

### III. Results and Discussion

Vote buying and selling is an election campaign violation that occurs in many countries and undermines the integrity of elections and is detrimental to democratic governance. This illegal practice occurs due to the limited capacity of the state, the lack of political will by political parties to comply with laws and the politicization of oversight institutions (Joseph & Vashchanka, 2022).

The bribery mechanism carried out by bribers aims to change the election results for their own benefit by targeting certain voters without exceeding the budget portion. Bribery has several ways of manipulation to cover up its behavior because the briber must find the right preferences so that he finds strategic voters who are bribed so that he can be asked to change his preferred vote (Maushagen et al., 2022).

As described in the previous introduction, vote buying can target certain individuals or groups of voters with a limit of treatment between particularistic politicians who provide favorable treatment for certain groups in society. The benefits of Vote Buying can target voters in both urban and rural communities. The forms of goods and services provided by contestants (bribes) during the election period can be in the form of temporary community needs such as essential basic needs services, infrastructure support (improved access) or additional public spending

(travel expenses) as a normative perspective on the needs of the general public. However, such benefits are often provided without the direct participation of the electorate. Vote buying entails a commitment or at least an expectation that a voter will provide electoral support that is compensated for by paying and establishing a means for which it is advantageous for a candidate to engage systematically (price-interpretation). Votes that have been purchased can secure commitments and monitor voter compliance varies from the price given. At least, the money politics transaction requires two elements, (a). the willingness of voters to engage in a price-interpretation relationship that can be driven by a single factor, or a combination of factors. Voters will make rational choices in the light of their calculations to participate in political transactions to obtain what they perceive as a mere financial exchange rate rather than votes. (b). Vote buying behavior is part of cultural or social norms that have been naturally formed for a long time by several factors such as education, poverty, politico-business, and patron-client relations. This calculation is an attitude and a rational choice that can come from several causes, however, this behavior is based on conscious and unconscious voters, such as awareness of social marginalization or voter ignorance. The threat from vote buying activities targets the democratic order, political culture, political ethics and political morals in Indonesia at every moment of general elections and local elections in the regions so that they are often considered to be political colors and patterns thicken with vote buying transactions.

In his doctoral research, Burhanudin Muhtadi found that one in three voters was exposed to this practice in the 2014 elections. This places Indonesia in third place in the world's ranking of countries that engage in the most money politics during elections. He processed data from various surveys conducted between 2006 and 2016 with more than 800,000 respondents throughout Indonesia.

#### A. Destruction of Democracy Through Vote Buying Determinants in General Elections in Indonesia

Vote buying or voter bribery is a practice that is detrimental to democracy because it eliminates

the right to vote that is free and fair. The practice of vote buying in general elections in Indonesia has become a serious problem in democracy development. This happens because there is a desire to win the general election by any means, including by giving money or goods to voters to choose a particular candidate.

Voters who accept bribes tend to vote for candidates who give bribes, not on the basis of the candidate who is the best or best suited to the needs of society. This results in the selection of candidates who are not qualified or do not have the capacity to lead properly. For example, samples were taken from voters who chose candidates after being given more than twice as much money in Blitar Regency compared to the Surabaya City Regional Election. Voters in Surabaya City are only 6 percent, while in Blitar Regency were 15 percent. This is influenced by the characteristics of the majority of the people of Blitar Regency farming community (farm workers). The condition of socio-economic status along with people's disappointment with the attitude of candidates who tend not to pay attention to their constituents when they take office makes people choose based on economic rationality. Voters base their choices on what they get (Sahab, 2012).

The principles of democracy refer to the fundamental values and ideals that support a democratic government system, in vain if the government system is filled by people who are elected from the results of political transactions. The election of such candidates will raise doubts and uncertainties about upholding democratic principles such as protecting individual rights, encouraging participation and representation, and upholding the rule of law. In one of the principles of democracy by Robert Dahl contains the right to vote and be elected. In addition, democratic principles emphasize the protection of human rights, including freedom of speech, religion and assembly. Democratic principles promote the active participation of citizens in political, economic and cultural life. This includes the ability to organize, vote, and engage in the political process (BKF, 2023; Ivanivna, 2020).

In Indonesia, districts whose electorate falls into the category of voters who are marginalized socially, economically or politically and live in

densely populated neighborhoods (or slums) can be considered 'vote banks' by predators. These findings are included in the level of vulnerability at the provincial level which is measured in the IKP (Election Vulnerability Index) score, namely (Bawaslu RI, 2023): (1) DKI Jakarta is the province with the highest IKP, with a total score of 88.95, (2). Sulawesi Utara (87.48), (3). Maluku Utara (84.86), (4). Jawa Barat (77.04), and (5). Kalimantan Timur (74.04). Meanwhile, the five provinces with the lowest IKP in order from the lowest are Bengkulu (3.79), Sulawesi Selatan (10.20), Nusa Tenggara Barat (11.09), Jambi (12.03) and Kalimantan Barat (12.69).

Electoral districts with voters who are classified as marginalized often have special problems, such as limited access to political information, limited economic resources, and inadequate infrastructure resulting in political apathy. This situation makes it very possible for voters in the marginalized category to become campaign commodities and objects of the distribution of vote buying and selling transactions. As a result, the quality of democracy becomes a very serious problem because of vote-buying by exchanging (material exchange rate-vote expectations). The omission of this weakening of democracy is wanted by predators as one of the electoral manipulations. Vote buying is the main element that can be played in driving electoral mobilization in many countries that are just enjoying democracy (Jensen & Justesen, 2014).

Ironically, instead of minimizing vote-buying in Indonesia, during the process of transition from an authoritarian regime to democracy, it actually presents patterns and colors of non-democratic behavior that have lasted for so long in political contestation at the national to local levels.

In transactional democracy, as described earlier, democratic institutions such as the sovereignty of political parties have very weak power with the design of modern political institutions that are not independent. So that the implementation of elections is only described as a pseudo-embodiment of democracy over the practice of vote buying. Damage to democracy in local areas/regions with such a large number of voters is easily exposed to vote-buying patterns and is more worrying about political crimes being

seen as a systemic pattern that becomes an open secret and is natural even though there are threatening regulations. Politicians of political parties and candidates try to seduce voters by offering particular materialistic rewards. The practice of buying and selling votes is a side effect of holding elections that are competitive but lack creativity. This situation is the biggest threat to the democratic process, such as general elections, which reduces the integrity of the democratic process.

If we look at the comparison of vote buying practices in Southeast Asia, such as Thailand or the Philippines, vote buying is an ongoing problem. One of them is caused by the disruption of the driving forces of democracy, namely the weak party system, this condition also occurs in the Philippines and is a major contributor to the prevalence of vote buying in Thailand. Because the existence of a weak party means that party members compete with each other, the individual candidate's campaign strategy is more important than the party's candidate. The similarity of Vote Buying in its operation and targeting as in the Philippines, vote buying in selected villages and community groups is carried out through influential intermediaries and these characteristics are also found in Paraguay, Taiwan, Thailand, Senegal and Indonesia (Canare et al., 2018). The existence of weak political parties can trigger competition between party members which is more focused on personal interests than the interests of the party as a whole, especially competition between politicians. This can result in the individual candidate's campaign strategy becoming more important than the party's overall campaign strategy so that any means will be used to obtain maximum votes. The similarity of the Vote Buying mechanism in several countries is carried out through "influential intermediaries". This shows that this practice is carried out in a systematic and organized manner.

Whereas, 22 countries in Latin America have in common the use of swing voters as the largest group among voters. Political parties have been monitoring and targeting voters who political parties say are more likely to comply with agreements on vote-buying transactions. Therefore, party machines are more likely to target poor or marginalized voters who do not have strong partisan attachments (non-patron-

clients or so-called partisanship). Swing voters by definition have only weak or no ties to any and particular party. If the swing voter is in the poor category, it is easier to switch choices due to the use of material incentives. The effect of poverty on vote buying has been moderated by partisanship. The potential roles of poverty and partisanship are equally important for buying votes. The results also provide some suggestive evidence that poverty matters especially for swing voters, even though the outcome of vote buying operations depends on the measure of poverty in vote buying transactions (Justesen & Manzetti, 2023).

The vote-buying mechanism has made it attractive for politicians to carry out vote-buying transactions because it considers a collection of poor citizens as a big commodity for political transactions, lower political costs in financing in the form of exchanging money for votes. Politicians greatly benefit from a temporary relationship with a partisanship swing voter group but can be further strengthened if voters with this character have little or no knowledge about the background of the candidate running for office. Uncertainty about the secrecy of ballots in general elections results in doubts about the impact of voter votes. So that the political scenario of vote buying during the pre-election period provides flexibility for politicians to use more effective methods and mobilize large groups of poor voters, partisanship swing voters, compared to campaigns based on promises and program redistribution after the general election. For workers/labour, there is an 18.9 percent chance that they will accept the money and choose the candidate who offers the money (or who offers the most), compared with a 13.3 percent chance for those working in other fields. Workers experienced a 49 percent change in their choice of conscience compared to a 44 percent change for others. And workers were only 32 percent likely to reject the money compared with 42.8 percent of workers outside the labor sector (Pradhanawati et al., 2019).

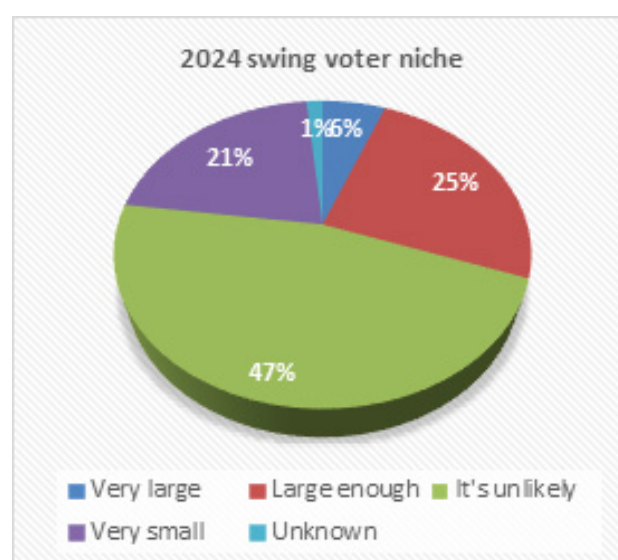
Compared to that experienced by the African continent, the record of democracy shows that the electoral process is colored by the distribution of cash to voters during elections, the buying and selling of votes is very widespread. Thus, raising concerns about the quality of existing democratic institutions and doubts about better



electoral processes to produce more accountable governments. A candidate will protect and serve their interests in the future, provision of patronage resources. This is supported by Eric Jonathan Kramon's 2013 dissertation study which described African countries in the Vote Buying phenomenon as still confidential and sensitive even though the implementation of vote-buying often occurs during election times, for example cash has influenced the choice of votes by around 20 percent. Kenyan citizens in elections. Of the 18 African countries showing the presence of vote buying, which focuses on the role of the political machine or the mobilization of the number of voters. A political candidate has distributed cash, they prefer that candidate to an identical candidate who does not. This effect is particularly strong among poorer categories of voters to elect paying candidates. In addition, vote buying increases voters' expectations that a candidate will provide them with personal protection and benefits in the future, direct evidence of patronage by vote buying has strengthened and perpetuated ethnic patterns especially the tendency of voters to support members of their own ethnic group (Kramon, 2013).

The character of political parties who accept bribes and their various mechanisms in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Africa are converging on the same pattern of behavior in undermining democracy. Individual decision making in a situation where the choice will be based on a rational calculation of costs and benefits on a transaction scale is called price-interpretation. This situation can be shaped by candidates and conditions of economic poverty and political information. When applied to the context of political parties, the rational choice of political parties shows that in a particularistic way parties will act in the interests of candidates who have financial resources (business-politico) in maximizing their chances of gaining and retaining power. Highlights the incentives individual politicians have to prioritize their own interests over those of the party. For example, a politician or candidate may be more concerned with securing their own election than advancing the goals of the party as a whole. This can lead to a lack of party cohesion and failure to develop a clear and consistent party platform. Simultaneously these factors also contribute to the weakness of

political parties due to the influence of external actors, such as interest groups and donors. These groups may have their own agendas and may be more interested in supporting individual candidates who are sympathetic to their cause, rather than supporting the party as a whole. This was previously meant to be transactional business politics fragmented on support and lack of coherence in the party's message to its true constituents because it has formed temporary swing voter partisanship ties and permanent patron-client ties. The following swing voter data is presented in the image below:

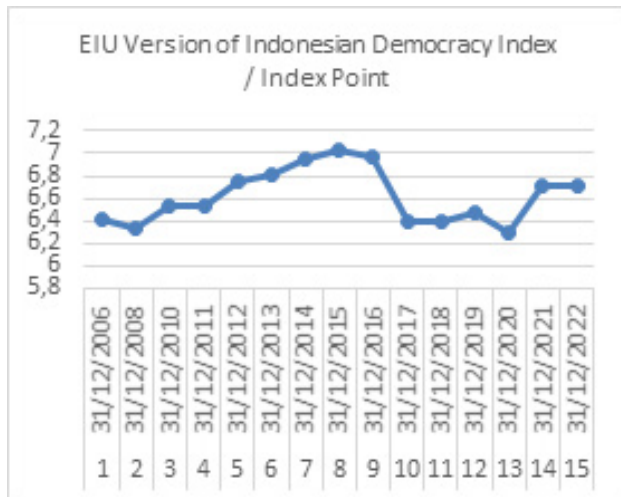


**Figure 2.** Swing voter 2024

Source: (Indikator, 2023)

The Indonesian Political Indicator entitled Swing Voters, Socialization Effects, and Electoral Trends Ahead of the September 2023 edition of the 2024 Presidential Election shows that 30.5% of the total respondents admitted that it was still possible to change their choice for certain presidential candidates. This fairly large niche consisted of 5.9% of respondents stating that there was a very high possibility of changing their chosen presidential candidate and 24.6% of respondents admitted that the possibility was quite large. However, the percentage of respondents who might not change their support for their favorite presidential candidate tends to be higher, that is 67.9%.

**B. Destruction of Political Culture Through Vote Buying Determinants in General Elections in Indonesia**



**Figure 3.** Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Democracy Index  
 Source: (York & Kong, 2023)

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Democracy Index, Indonesia's democracy index is still classified as flawed democracy. Indonesia's democracy index, during the era of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) tended to increase, from 6.41 (2006) to 6.95 (2014). Then in President Jokowi's administration the score fluctuated. It had reached 7.03 (2015) and the latest data reached 6.71 (2022). EIU routinely assesses the condition of democracy in 165 countries based on five major indicators, namely the electoral process and political pluralism, government governance, the level of community political participation, political culture, and civil liberties. The assessment results are then formulated into an index on a scale of 0-10. The higher the score, the better the quality of a country's democracy. The EIU also groups the index scores into four types of democracy, namely:

Index score >8: full democracy, Index score >6 to ≤8: flawed democracy, Index score >4 to ≤6: hybrid democracy (hybrid regime), Index score ≤4: authoritarian (authoritarian).

In several definitions regarding the concept of political culture put forward by (1). Austin

Ranney, political culture is a set of perspectives on politics and government that have a pattern of orientation towards political objects. (2). Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr. political culture is the attitudes, beliefs, values and skills that apply to the entire population, as well as special tendencies and patterns that exist in certain parts of the population. (3). Sidney Verba, political culture is an empirical belief system, expressive symbols and values that define a situation where political action is carried out (Pureklolon, 2021).

In a political society there is a political culture that is inherent but different from one another. Political culture is divided into two groups of commoners and political elites. Political culture is closely related to traditional, transitional and modern political system societies. The perception of the political community is reflected in the attitude towards the political education they receive and the political events that occur and influence the formation of the structure and process of the political action of the community itself. Interests in the political system are the relations between people regarding power, rules and political culture defined as systems of shared values. The political community consciously participates in collective decisions and public order. Simply put, the concept of political culture is the values developed and practiced by a particular society in the political field.

Formation of political culture in society, motivated by empathy with individual narratives, coherence processing of conflictual political society, which is then built and legitimized by the emotional and also rational voters. This is supported by experiments by Renstrom & Ottati (2020) which show that high empathy messages conveyed by a political candidate produce more positive messages and increase individual attitudes towards voting for political candidates. This empathy comes from the Communication Effect of political candidates. Candidates will be evaluated more positively when they use empathetic language. It has also explored that the impact of empathetic rhetoric on voters' perceptions of socio-emotionality and instrumentality is very influential.

Therefore, the cost of election campaigns is very high on individual politicians' attempts

to create an empathetic relationship with voters that is strong enough to legitimize the electorate to vote for them. The tendency to allow opinion polls by survey institutions has changed policies, individual voters have become Swing Voters, the effect has contributed to changing political relations to market needs relations so that politics becomes a commodity that is sold to businesses. In accordance with what was stated by Lakoff in his book framing theory (Nielsen, 2018), the presence of a critical attitude towards prospective candidates which implicitly forms a harmonious context between politicians / parties and issues of identity and taste preferences among prospective voters.

Referring to the depiction of analysis by Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Germaine de Staël, Benjamin' Constant, Pierre Royer-Collard, François Guizot, and Alexis de Tocqueville, an analysis of the historical and social conditions in which various political powers can be enforced institutionally and culturally (Brint, 2019). Political power rests on a special emphasis on the political implications of *les moeurs*, in which political culture is formed by the habits, character, traditions and expectations of society.

In the study of vote buying in elections in Indonesia, political culture has a tendency to reject the basic premise of individualism but is stronger in the philosophical traditions of empiricism and rationalism. For example, Vote Buying is not created based solely on the subjective or psychological content of the human mind. However, philosophical grounds have rejected the claim that the aggregation of subjective attitudes or vote buying behavior in accepting vote buying is formed in the context of social norms and rules-governed behavior in which the motives and intentions of individuals in certain politics.

Meanwhile, the effect of the entire system is uniformly negative for future voters. Vote buying becomes retail and cheap politics because of political norms in the form of democracy from business brokers that undermine the value and essence of democracy itself. Engagement of brokers who have local relationships and maintain very long personal relationships with voters and use their political connections to help facilitate vote buying. This causes the broker to be trusted

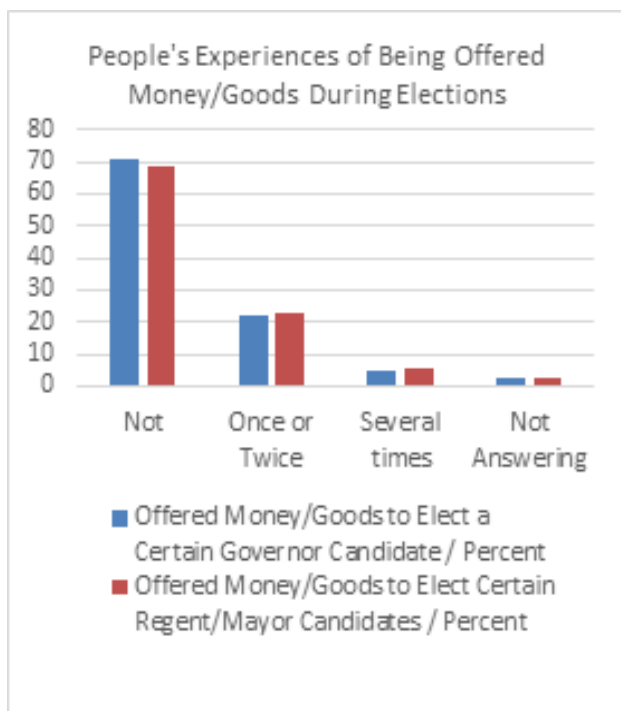
by many people. In addition, brokers can directly vote for individuals they have trusted to vote as previously instructed. The recurring culture of vote buying normalizes these illegal interactions as the norm. The end goal is to get a large number of voters to perceive the act of voting with some benefit as an opportunity for charitable people. Imbalance and coercion characterize the nature of transactional politics which makes the campaign style more colored by the usual clientelistic exchanges other than materialistic rewards. Vote buying at least leads to conflicting norms on voter political behavior (Ocantos et al., 2014).

The line of literature regarding the role of norms in patron-client relations has positioned patrons as guarantees of employment, protection, or gifts to their clients and the established norm is that clients are expected to return the favor (with obligation). The norm of reciprocity is the basis of trust between the patron-client and their relationship. Such social norms can cement patron-client relationships and internalize a strong sense of obligation among beneficiaries of vote buying. This was confirmed by Finan and Schechter who stated in their experimental research that politicians have the possibility to take advantage of the norm of reciprocity when using a vote buying strategy in exchange for cash or gifts before the election. From these results, there is individual reciprocity carried out by intermediaries to state that politicians use intermediaries to target reciprocal voters in Vote Buying (Finan & Schechter, 2023).

The reciprocity norm is part of the political culture which requires parties that provide benefits or services to other parties to receive equivalent or comparable rewards. In the political context, this norm is often interpreted as providing mutual support or assistance between parties involved in the political process. The norm of political reciprocity is not universal and may be vulnerable to political mobilization against it but in fact this political mobilization did not occur at the moment of general elections in Indonesia. Normative evaluations of vote buying vary, based on voters' understanding of trade-offs and the social costs associated. Therefore, social acceptance of vote buying depends on beliefs about the costs and benefits of this exchange.

Individuals often behave in ways that cannot be explained by rational interests alone. This led to the development of a second-generation rationality model that incorporates other factors, such as norms of reciprocity, reputation and trust (Ostrom, 2014). The norm of reciprocity refers to the idea that individuals are more likely to cooperate with others if they believe that others will reciprocate their actions. This can lead to the development of social norms that encourage cooperation and prevent consensus on choices. For example, if individuals believe that others will cooperate in vote buying, they are more likely to contribute self-consciously.

This is reinforced by the data findings presented in the graph below:



**Figure 4.** People's Experiences of Being Offered Money/ Goods During Elections

Source: (Bayu, 2021b)

Katadata contains a survey conducted by LSI which recorded that 21.9% of respondents in the 2020 regional election areas had been offered money or goods once or twice to vote for a particular gubernatorial candidate. Then, 4.7% of respondents admitted that they had been offered money or goods several times to vote for certain gubernatorial candidates. As many as 22.7% of respondents in the 2020 regional election

areas admitted that they had been offered money or goods to vote for certain regent/mayor candidates. There were 5.7% of respondents who admitted that they had been offered money or goods several times to vote for certain regent/mayor candidates.

### C. Destruction of Moral and Political Ethics Through Vote Buying Determinants in General Elections in Indonesia

Vote buying is considered a form of corruption and a violation of moral standards in the context of elections. Some points of political moral and ethical standards that are harmed by vote buying: (1). Integrity, vote buying undermines the integrity of the electoral process by manipulating voters through material incentives rather than informed decision making based on political principles and policies. (2). Ethics, leaving the use of morals and ethics in the practice of vote buying. This is contrary to the principles of fairness, transparency and equal representation in democratic elections (Alfa & Fahmi, 2022) (3). Impact on Participation, vote buying can have positive and negative impacts on political participation. On the one hand, it can increase political participation for those who receive incentives. On the other hand, it can undermine trust and reduce participation for those who view it as a corrupt practice.

The initiative to make vote buying reasonable doesn't just come from voters who demand benefits from this relationship. In order to satisfy these voters and avoid other pragmatic considerations, many politicians like to present themselves as distributors of personal customers and the gift is made as an attempt to justify moral vote buying. To 'buy' votes in Indonesia can be widely read in the context of moral economy as giving gifts which are often known as "kinship" money. This camouflage is adapted from giving money for religious holidays in Indonesia or often referred to as "angpao". Therefore, recipients may not feel that the handout cash they receive is a morally questionable form of 'money politics' but rationalized the view as the most effective and low-risk strategy because it is overshadowed by the Indonesian custom of generally giving gifts to people. Another one is a moral form as a reminder or just what is referred to as "alms or candy money".



Many candidates and brokers do so as a form of gift, token of appreciation, or reciprocity for their supporters. In such cases, vote buying is not defined in terms of economic market transactions; rather, it is a function of complex social relations entangled in the traditional moral economy of exchanging votes for gifts (Walker, 2014). Vote buying is not defined in terms of market economic transactions but, on the contrary, this form of bribery has a function of complex social relations and is bound by traditional ethical moral economic fairness which then exchanges votes to get prizes (Aspinall et al., 2017). The act of Vote Buying is not seen as a bribe by clientelists because it is considered part of the moral economy of elections such as events on other holiday celebrations that must be completed with an "envelope", or perceives it as a signal of positive personal qualities of the giver, such as generosity, compassion, responsiveness, and respect and believe that the candidate who gives it is good or worthy of being selected.

Vote buying within the social norm of reciprocity helps generate a feeling of obligation on the part of the beneficiary to reciprocate with support. So, the exchange of financial benefits needs to be packaged in the language of morality and generosity. The pattern of giving gifts in elections usually has political power with very large resources and money so that the distribution of small amounts of money to voters can be evenly distributed. As a token of gratitude, it has become the basic culture of the Vote Buying moral economic strategy.

However, relatively speaking, Partisanship Swing Voters, especially voters who have low social strata such as economy and education, are more likely to be targets of this strategy because this type of voter does not have the risk of financial loss from the effect of maintaining clientelism which is continuously maintained and receives gifts from its patrons. In Indonesia, the basic culture of the moral economy of the Vote Buying strategy is very dependent on the partisanship of voters who create norms of reciprocity. This model does not require voters to have strong ideological attachments. In contrast, according to this model, clientelistic practices result in a sense of moral obligation or debt on the part of beneficiaries to vote for candidates

who distribute in exchange for gifts. In this case, voters may not fully agree with the political views of the candidates or political parties they vote for, but feel morally bound to vote for them because they have received rewards.

#### IV. Conclusion

The high cost of politics is a complex issue that can be influenced by various factors, including buying and selling votes. This practice can lead to a distorted election process, in which the candidate with the most money can win the election, regardless of qualifications or policies. Although there are other factors such as campaign costs, which can involve expensive advertising, travel, and staff. In addition, political parties and candidates may need to spend money on research, polls, and other activities to gain a competitive advantage.

However, the practicality of the Vote Buying mechanism in predatory network practices is more promising because this practice is for certain targets who have been selected and have established dependency relationships (price-taste). Voting is a fundamental democratic right that allows individuals to express their preferences and shape the political landscape. However, when voters feel morally bound to support a candidate or political party because of a gift or award, it raises concerns about the integrity of the electoral process and the potential for undue influence. In a healthy democracy, voters should base their choice on a thorough understanding of the candidate's policies, qualifications, and values.

Voting solely for the sake of a gift or award undermines the principles of an informed decision-making and can lead to outcomes that are not in the best interests of the electorate. In previous research, the determinants of people's behavior have a tendency to accept goods and services from various backgrounds, such as occupation, economic level, and family relationships. However, apart from that, the impact of electoral malpractice carried out by political elites actually plunges democracy and the nation's political identity into moral culture and political ethics damage.

The destruction of democracy, political

culture, morals and political ethics through the determinants of vote buying in general elections in Indonesia based on the study of the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that: (1). Nominal rules have not had a deterrent effect. (2). Low political awareness of people who are exposed to vote buying. (3). The educationally and economically marginalized are politically neglected. (4). There is no anti-bribery formulation in the pilot scheme and sustainable maintenance practices. (5). The bias of political party sovereignty as the main instrument in preventing politico-business intervention. (6). Unequal distribution of poverty and education. It is therefore critical for voters to critically evaluate candidates and their platforms, taking into account factors such as track record, policy proposals, and alignment with personal values.

Engaging in open discussions, attending public debates, and researching credible sources of information can help voters make informed choices that reflect their own beliefs and priorities. To maintain the integrity of the electoral process, it is important for governments and electoral bodies to enforce strict regulations and transparency measures.

So, to accelerate these steps it is necessary to suggest: (1). In terms of the mechanism, the rules that are made with the nominal stated in the regulatory sanctions for violations of election bribery have not provided a deterrent effect, so there is a need to evaluate the value of sanctions that are more severe than 10 billion rupiah. (2). Political awareness of improving the quality of education that can be instilled since basic education and the family environment. (3). Political education for educationally and economically marginalized people. (4). Social engineering or social intervention in the form of an anti-bribery area scheme that targets the public to overcome the spread of vote buying patterns that have become a culture of political contestation. (5). The assertiveness of political parties as the main instrument in upholding party sovereignty from politico-business intervention. (6). The most basic thing and the government's obligation is to eradicate poverty and education to realize equitable prosperity in Indonesia so that it can minimize the commodities of predatory vote buying.

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