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Regional Head Election, Money Politics, and Corruption: An Alternative Solution

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Abstract

This study aimed to study the massive and systematic extent of money politics in the 2017 elections of the Bireuen District. This study used a qualitative method with the participant-observer approach. Data were collected through FGD at Al-Muslim University in Bireuen and in-depth interviews with the relevant parties. The practice of money-politics in the Bireuen election was very immaculate and well-coordinated. It started by collecting the photocopies of ID and family registry cards and ended with distributing the money before and after the voting. The campaign teams in each village helped to assist this process to the villagers. The study found five major causes of money politics in the Bireuen District. First, the public confidence in the political elections has declined. Second, the political orientation of the community was pragmatic. Third, several candidates had the same power in the election; thus, they had no other choices but to give away money to the public in the hope of being elected. Fourth, the prevention of money politics in the local elections of the Bireuen regent was somewhat weak. The elections supervisory committee does not have the authority to punish the political money perpetrators but could only give recommendations to the District Independent Elections Commission (KIP). These recommendations are subject to being processed or neglected. Lastly, the regulation of money politics was also weak in the Bireuen regional election. This massive money politics in Bireuen could be prevented by establishing a concept and formulating policies in the form of qanun (Islamic bylaws) in Aceh. The qanun could cancel or disqualify the regent candidates if they are proven to have committed money politics based on convincing and legally binding evidence. The political parties could also be deprived of their political rights to carry the regional head candidates for a term of office. Aceh, through its self-government, has a special authority to produce regulations that do not contradict the higher regulation in Indonesia. The function of the qanun is to break the chain and the money politics system by imposing punishment on the regent candidates and political parties. This research has never been investigated before, especially the regulation potential to break the chains of money politics by establishing a qanun to be applied in Aceh.

Keywords: Local Election, Political Candidates, Money Politics, Corruption, Regulation

1. Introduction

Money interventions in political life have been entrenched in Indonesian culture. The relationship between economy and politics is the main character behind the development model of a country adopting the democratic

system. Money is a significant medium or instrument for controlling energy and resources. It has a distinctive characteristic from the beginning, which can be transferred and exchanged (Alexander, 1976; Aspinall, 2015; Rifai, 2003). The practice of money politics is rampant in the 2018 elections. Money is difficult to avoid when one runs for election in Indonesia because the current elections require extraordinary political costs. Being a candidate requires money, and everyone seems to agree with that. The use of money in the elections would not produce the best regional leader. The leader will concern more on the 'return of investment' rather than providing good services to the community (Badoh & Dahlan, 2010; Purdey, Tadem, & Tadem, 2016).

Money politics have become a new trend and have been entrenched in the Acehese community (Serambinews.com, 2017c). One local media reported that during the Aceh Governor Election in 2017, the residents of Gampong Ulee Glee of Bandar Dua Subdistrict in Pidie Jaya were allegedly involved in money politics by distributing envelopes containing IDR 50,000 money and business cards of the candidate pairs of number 5. The envelopes were delivered three days ahead of the election (Serambinews.com, 2017b). Money politics does not only take place in Pidie Jaya District in the 2017 election but also happen in Bireuen District. The members of the Bireuen community and youth alliance protested the alleged money politics practice in front of the Election Supervisory Committee Office in Bireuen (Modusaceh.co, 2017). The protesters demanded the investigation of alleged practices of money politics in the 2017 elections in Bireuen. One of the candidates was reported to give away IDR 100,000 money to the voters (Serambinews.com, 2017a).

The practice of money politics during the local election in the Bireuen District was deployed massively and systematically by the pair of candidates who finally won the election. Information about the practice of money politics was not only discussed by the public but also became the subject of discussion among the election participants (Kanalaceh.com, 2017). As a result, except for the witnesses from the candidate number 4 and 6, others refused to sign the voting recapitulation minutes at the sub-district level. In addition, 17 sub-districts in Bireuen also denied the signing of the voting minutes (AceHTrend.com, 2017). This rejection denotes a negative value for the regional democratic party in Bireuen since money politics had become the public consumption of daily gossips. The politicians who took part in the political contest for district regent have not taken any lesson from this phenomenon. The regional head candidates who participated in the political contest should be able to provide political education to the community. All candidates are supposed to rely more on their work programs or vision and mission for the next five years rather than embarking on the money politics practice. On the other hand, most voters do not consider the candidates' programs and track record before voting (Nurrahmi, 2017) so that they will be easily manipulated by the candidates.

In that case, the independence of the election organizers is also at stake when supervising each candidate in campaigning their programs. The election supervision committee (PANWASLIH) is obliged to oversee the process of organizing the elections properly by referring to the law. PANWASLIH has given them the authority to supervise every move of each candidate participating in the regional election (Makhya & Bakti, 2017; Nivada, 2015; Zulfa, 2017).

It has been shown that money politics has the potential to adversely affect the democratic process. The money politics can also cause discrepancies in the practice of political power by the winning candidates (Pamungkas, 2010; Syahbandir, Hasan, & Izwar, 2019). These thought-disturbing facts on the practice of local political democracy have encouraged the researchers to conduct research on this topic. This study aims to examine the issue of money politics by specifically looking at the 2017 regional election of Bireuen, Aceh, as a case study in order to provide alternative solutions to combat money politics.

2. Literature Review

The practice of money politics in Indonesian is bribery. The meaning of bribery in the standard Indonesian dictionary is the money used for bribery. Money politics is the exchange of money with the aim of determining one's position. Policies and political decisions are made in the name of the public interests but led to personal,

group, or political party gain. Money politics can also influence other people. For example, the use of private or party's property to influence the voters, distribution of material rewards, buying and selling votes in the political process, and distributing money. Money politics is part of the corruption in the election process. It is basically a bribe transaction performed by a candidate with the aim of gaining votes (Badoh & Dahlan, 2010; Goodpaster, 2001; Kumolo, 2015; Maiwan & Zid, 2017; Pamungkas, 2010; Sardini, 2019).

Money politics is defined as the use of money or rewards to directly influence to vote for the candidates who would protect the interests of the funder. The main purpose of money politics is to protect the interests of the funder by influencing the actions of the government to defend their interests (if the president or governor candidate they support is elected). Politics unarguably needs funds. Political expenditure is planned and used for various campaign programs to build political communication with constituents, absorb and articulate interests to the community. In the competition to win the voters, politicians without funds are almost certain to lose. However, political funds and money politics are clearly different. They differ in the mode and source of the fund used to earn voter support. Politicians who do not have funds will almost certainly be defeated and eliminated. They not only need a large enough campaign fund to win the support of constituents but also funds to gain the blessing and support from the party elites who back them (Hidayat & Kleden, 2004; IFES, 2000; Lane, 2014; Mochtar, 2011).

Politics can also plunge people into the vortex of crime, as "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." People who have power tend to be evil, and if they have so much power, the tendency to become evil increases exponentially. The motives for political action are three basic things: maintaining power, adding power or displaying power. This phenomenon can be found in Indonesia politics. Those who were poor and mediocre become wealthy beyond common sense and logic. Many politicians and bureaucrats in Indonesia have been caught in a raid by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) for alleged bribery and corruption as public officials. Based on data from the Corruption Eradication Commission, 65% of criminal acts of corruption committed are in the form of bribery cases. The KPK released that from 2004-2019 there were 124 regional heads caught in corruption. 65 percent act criminal corruption handled KPK is cases bribery. Corruption committed by these state officials has resulted in state losses and decreased public confidence towards officials, bureaucrats, and politicians in Indonesia. As a result, political contestation is only for power contest event for the elite to justify any means (Dhakidae, 2015; Johnston, 2005; Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, 2017).

Therefore, corruption highly correlates with the rampant cases of money politics that are commonly found during 'unhealthy' elections in Indonesia. Although the election is expected to celebrate democracy, it failed to run its function because it is rife with fraud committed by election participants. In this regard, money politics is one among manifested election fraud in Indonesia (Kumolo, 2015; Permata, 2015, 2017a, 2017b; Permata & Zuchron, 2018).

The emergence of the practice of money politics found in most elections in Indonesia has become the biggest challenges to democratization in the country. In some regions, money politics is practiced in public, either it is done by the candidate or his/her campaign team. Politicians have conducted illicit practices during elections to gain votes. The most common and striking manifestation of electoral crime is to bribe voters (Goodpaster, 2001; Kurniawan, Rahmatunnisa, & Agustino, 2017; Permata, 2017a, 2019; Pfeiffer, 2004; Rahman, 2015).

An example of money politics is the case of Bowo Sidik Pangarso, the legislative candidate from Golkar Party for Central Java *Dapil* (electoral districts) 2, who was caught red-handed by KPK. It was found 84 boxes contained approximately 1,400 envelopes comprising IDR 20,000 and IDR 50,000 denominations. The total is around IDR 8 billion rupiah. KPK suspected that the money would be used to buy votes before the polls opened (cnnindonesia.com, 2019; Kontan.co.id, 2019; Tempo.co, 2019). This case is similar to the cases of Adriatma and Asrun. The two were caught red-handed by KPK because they received a bribe from a businessman (cnnindonesia.com, 2018; Okenews, 2018; TribunSolo.com, 2018). Asrun requested campaign funds from businessmen to participate in the 2018 Southeast Sulawesi Governor Election. The bribe is expected to be used for money politics (Antaraneews.com, 2018; Kompas.com, 2018b; Tirto.id, 2018).

Another case of money politics involved the legislative candidates from PAN, Mandala Abadi and Lucky Andriani, who were sentenced to six months in prison and an IDR 5 million fine. Both were believed to be guilty about distributing umrah coupons and door prizes during their political campaigns. Mandala was a legislative candidate for Jakarta *Dapil* (electoral districts) 2 number 5 from PAN. While Lucky was a legislative candidate for Jakarta *Dapil* (electoral districts) Central Jakarta number 6 from PAN (detiknews, 2018a; Kumparan, 2018; Liputan6.com, 2018).

A case of money politics also occurred at the organizers of Indonesian elections. The former head of the **Garut** Elections Supervisory Committee (**Panwaslu Garut**), Heri Hasan Basri, and the former commissioner of the **Garut** General Elections Commission (**KPU Garut**), Ade Sudrajat were caught red-handed by the Anti-Money Politics Task Force. Both received bribes including money and cars from one of the Garut regent candidate (detiknews, 2018b; Kompas.com, 2018a; TribunLampung.co.id, 2018).

3. Method

This research was a case study which was aimed at understanding ideas and values from the research subjects. In case study research, a researcher determines the framework to collect information or data based on certain categories, such as socio-cultural background, interpretation system, etc. The research method suitable for case study research is a qualitative method. With the above assumption, this research used a case study design and the object of the study was the regional head election, money politics and corruption as an alternative solution.

The method adopted was a qualitative method, with ethnographic and naturalistic inquiry approaches. A naturalistic inquiry is an approach for the understanding of social actualities and realities, and human understanding which has not contaminated with dominant characteristics of formal measurements or previously formed questions. Therefore, an ethnographer task in an ethnographic research study with a naturalistic inquiry approach is to extract people's perception, not to interpret their perception. One of the methods to extract their perception is fox taxonomy, i.e. extracting people's perception gradually (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 2017).

The use of a qualitative method in this research was motivated by the fact that it was more adaptable to situations when there is more than one fact and when they are more than one influences, values, and procedures. This study was descriptive exploratory research to understand the regional head election, money politics, and corruption. The results of this exploratory study can become a preliminary insight into the regional head election, money politics, and corruption.

Therefore, in this research, the results will reflect the data which have been conducted through in-depth interviews with informants and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) (Aminah & Roikan, 2019; Gorton, 2012; Silverman, 2015). Informants participated in in-depth interviews are Amiruddin Idris (Campaign team), Halim Zulkifli and Siti Aminah (voters), An-Nisa (NGO activist), Muliadi (academics), Dr. Purnama (the Aceh legislative candidate), Obama (politician/businessman), Muchlis R, Syaqui Futaqi (the Aceh legislative candidate), and Tgk Abdullah (ex-politician). In addition, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted at Al-Muslim University on 24 April 2019 with 18 participants including the Vice Head of the Regional Legislative Councils (DPRK) of Bireuen, community leaders, organizers of elections, academics, politicians, journalists and voters.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. The root of Money Politic Issues in Bireuen Regional Election

The massive transactional politics, such as that of money politics, is caused by several issues that can be studied thoroughly. Bireuen is one of the regions in Aceh Province which is still actively practicing money politics. Some political parties in Bireuen had prepared the money to buy votes per package in the regional head election. The price of each package between IDR 300,000 to IDR 500,000. The practice of money politics often becomes the root of the problem during the regional, legislative, and presidential elections. It is still unknown as this practice

occurs in the first place, whether due to the lack of campaign at the community level, lack of human resources in the election organizers, a culture in a democratic party, or only for economic opportunities in every five years. Based on the results from the FGD at Al-Muslim University on 24 April 2019, seven participants revealed that the anti-money politics campaign was still limited as it was only carried out in the city. The other six participants also answered that the government had less role in campaigning the money politics at the public level. Two participants argued that there was no specific budget regarding the money politics campaign in the elections. The last two participants provided different answers. The first said that the public participated in the campaign but still received the money while the others suggested the need for political education to the community and the money politics campaign.

In addition to the money politics campaign, the competence of an election organizer is a crucial issue. The organizer must be honest, clean, and independent in carrying out their duties. Low competence in the field of supervision may cause the practice of money politics. Based on the results from the FGD at Al-Muslim University on 24 April 2019, six FGD participants revealed that money politics in the election was caused by the lack of supervision knowledge among the election organizer, which resulted in the vulnerable implementation of political rules. Other five FGD participants also disclosed that the low competence of election organizers inhibited innovation in preventing corruption. Innovation in preventing money politics is very important in addition to knowledge of supervision to prevent money politics. Two FGD participants mentioned that the low educational background also triggers the practice of money politics. It can be concluded that money politics violations in the Bireuen regional election were caused by low competence of the organizers, lack of innovation, and low educational background.

Transactional politics (money politics) in Bireuen does not only happen in recent years but has occurred in previous years. It has grown to a culture taking place in every five years during the political contest. Political actors and the public have various reasons for participating in money politics. The practice of money politics in the Bireuen regional election could be observed from the public behavior in determining their political choices. This was found in the FGD at Al-Muslim University on 24 April 2019. Seven participants said that people chose certain candidates only if they receive benefits from them. Three participants also mentioned that the community received money from the prospective regent multiple times before the election. The other three participants explained that the community had a tendency to choose regent candidates based on their winning potential and big capital. They also further suggest that a small proportion of people received money but did not necessarily vote for them.

The case of money politics in Bireuen cannot be generalized to certain candidates who did not receive money but won, such as Abu Tumin Tu Haidar's son, who won the legislative election without giving money. According to interview with Amiruddin Idris (a campaign team) on 26 Mei 2019 in Bireuen, there are several factors that trigger the rise of money politics, such as lack of trust in political parties and the house of representatives and political and transactional fluctuations. He further added that the public punished these politicians by not re-electing them in the next term.

4.2. Forms of Money Politics in Bireuen Election.

Various forms of money politics are often carried out in the political competition. These include money, objects, facilities, and positions. This practice is carried out in order to win the political competition in the regional head election. The forms of money politics are as follows:

4.2.1. Cash Money

Cash money politics during the Bireuen regional election was technically carried out by distributing groceries and money during the political campaign. The distribution of money and groceries to voters is followed by an agreement to elect the benefit provider. Based on the interview with Halim Zulkifli, Blang Kulam resident on 28 May 2019, the agreement began by collecting the copies of ID and family card, after which they were given money prior to voting.

Village officials such as *Geuchik*, *Imum Gampong*, *Tuha Peut*, and *Tuha Lapan* are also involved in practical politics. They collected copies of the community ID cards and established a team at the village level. The people in Bireuen are afraid to report this money politics practice because its execution is so neat and systematic. It is difficult to prove even though the practice is real. In addition, based on the interview with Siti Aminah, Blang Kulam Residents on 28 Mei 2019, the candidates for the 2017 elections involved in the money politics came from the Golkar Party. She further added that the money politics strategy by distributing groceries and money to the public greatly contributed to Golkar's victory in the previous regional election.

4.2.2. Public Facility

Political promises made by candidates who took part in democratic parties usually have transactional political content or political reciprocity between the potential leaders and their supporters. The political promises are usually in the form of public facilities and require a commitment before and after being elected. These promises are usually related to public facilities such as footpaths to rice fields, water dike, and mosque construction. The case of money politics in regional head election is carried out by politicians, elites, and the public. Based on the interview with Muliadi, academics, at Al-Muslim University on 27 May 2019, there are three common forms of money politics; buying a position by paying a ransom to the political parties, buying opportunities and impunity so that the election administrators, witnesses, and law enforcers do not blame their practices, and buying people's votes.

Looking at the case study, there are two forms of money politics in Bireuen's regent elections. The first is political dowry. This is an act of purchasing positions or determining candidates by the political parties to advance someone as the regent candidate. Regarding political dowry, FGD at AL-Muslim University on 24 April 2019 revealed that out of eighteen FGD participants, fourteen participants stated that there was a political dowry in the Bireuen regional election. Two participants answered that there was a cadre crisis within the party. Thus, the party was looking for candidates outside the party, which was aimed to benefit the party. The other two participants did not express political dowry but said the candidates only sought profits once every five years. Second is buying people's votes. Buying the votes was done by giving away money before the election. The money was given away in various amounts. This practice of buying people's votes was observed when fifteen FGD participants coined the existence of money politics in the Bireuen regional election, where the campaign team of regent candidates gave away money to the public before voting. Apart from money, two FGD participants also mentioned that the campaign team also provided groceries and other facilities. One participant mentioned that those who got the money usually had access to the campaign team. Transactional politics in the Bireuen regional election was very strong and involved many people. In fact, this region was once in the public spotlight in Aceh and national levels.

4.3. Actors involved money politics in local election in Bireuen

Many actors are involved in the democratic process of political power, such as society, elites, and related stakeholders. Their involvement has important roles in the political dynamics of the governor, regent or mayor elections. In the case of Bireuen district election, many actors were involved in money politics. The followings are the results of the FGD regarding the actors of money politics in the 2017 Bireuen regional election. Seven participants mentioned that political parties, prospective regents, and the public were involved in money politics. The other five participants stated the campaign team, political parties, and prospective regent. The other participants cited the pairs of the regent candidate, the campaign team, community leaders, political parties, and related parties, while one person did not provide any answers. In every political election in Bireuen, those who have interests such as political parties, prospective regents and the public are often involved in money politics.

(a) **Political Parties.** The party involved in money politics was the party that had the dominant positions in the parliament and won the election. This party tended to be transactional and pragmatic in the recruitment process. Because the political costs are so high, this party demands a political dowry in the recruitment process of the regent candidate for the local election. This was reported by the sixteen FGD participants. They mentioned that the crisis within the party led to the party looking for the regent candidate from outside the party who was able to give benefits to the party. Two other participants mentioned that it was only to seek benefits for the five years term.

(b) **Regent Candidate.** Prospective Regent is the main actor with interest in political competition every five years. Their presence in political competition has a variety of motivations and missions. Their supporters and the campaign team were expecting access to power, interests, and money. The FGD conducted at Al Muslim University showed that the Bireuen regional election was very pragmatic and transactional. Fifteen participants explained that the regent candidate, through his campaign team, gave away money to the community before the election. One participant mentioned that in addition to money, they also distributed groceries to the communities. Another participant also added that they also provided facilities to the community on top of money and groceries. The other participant highlighted that this was executed by a coordinated network with the distribution delivered all at once.

Based on the interview with Siti Aminah, the Meunasah Blang resident on 26 May 2019, the candidates for regents who violated money politics were from one of the national political parties. This party won the election by bribing people with money. The money was usually distributed by women. People know that the candidate was a rich man in Bireuen and had a lot of money. In addition, some national parties also employed money politics by delivering food or money to win the election with the amount of IDR 50,000 and IDR 100,000 per person. However, the community did not vote for every candidate who gave them money because there were many candidates who did the same. Every political party and many village officials were involved in the practice of money politics.

(c) **Community.** Society is the main and vital object of political intents. It is a social entity that influences social and political interests. The community is the main object that supports the desires of politicians, such as legislative candidates and regent candidates. The dynamics that occurred in the Bireuen community in the 2017 elections were very disturbing for the democracy in the region that seek to generate quality leaders. The massive practice of money politics by the regent candidates who gave money and groceries to the community was hurting the democracy. The engagement of the Bireuen community in money politics because the previous regional leader failed to realize their political promises. This was revealed by eight participants during the FGD at Al-Muslim University on 24 April 2019. Six participants mentioned that the community preferred the candidate who gave them money and groceries because the previous regent failed to fulfill their political promises. Two participants explained that the community was disappointed because the incumbent did not keep their political promises. Other participants also disclosed that the community was disappointed in the political process that had been developed in this country. Many regional leaders did not keep their political promises. Some participants commented that the previous regent was good and was not involved in money politics even though he was an incumbent in the 2017 Bireuen regional election. The involvement of the Bireuen community in money politics during the 2017 regional elections is against the law and can be detrimental to everyone. The pragmatic nature of this society can affect the value of democracy and the quality of leaders yielded by this transactional system and money.

4.4. Money Politics Prevention

In the 2017 Bireuen regional election, the regent and legislative candidates committed many violations of money politics that were massive enough to become a conversation at the provincial and national levels. Money politics in Bireuen can be prevented by regulations that limit the political space of the perpetrators of money politics during the regional and legislative elections. Interviews with Dr. Purnama (the Aceh legislative candidate) and Obama (politician/businessman) on 26 Mei 2019, showed that one of the most important actors in preventing political money is political parties. Political parties can prevent political money by recruiting revolutionary, not instant cadres. The cadre should be carried out not only for one and two years but also sustainably. A good recruitment process will certainly produce good leaders. As a result, there would be fewer leaders involve in money politics during the campaign or election.

Regional head candidates who have fewer influences and are not well known to the public tend to adopt an alternative winning strategy by distributing money and groceries to the community. The proliferation of money politics was not only triggered by poor supervision and lack of public trust but also affected by intense competition between several candidates who have the same power. Thus, the candidate chose to execute money politics strategies ahead of the voting. Base on the interview with Tgk Abdullah, ex-politician on 28 May 2019, the similar fate took place in the legislative election; some candidates also gave IDR 500.000, - to elect a package of candidates for DPRK, DPRA, and DPRI. It was usually the women who distributed the money to the community.

Among several candidates in the regional head election, only one person was involved in money politics. According to the interview with An-Nisa, NGO activists on 27 May 2019, to anticipate money politics, *qanun* (Islamic bylaws) on money politics should be issued in Aceh. Aceh, with its special autonomy, self-government, and the Law on the Government of Aceh (UUPA), has the right to produce such a bylaw. Several parties must involve in formulating the money politic *qanun* such as cultural leaders, community leaders, scholars, and academics.

The followings are the results of the FGD at Al-Muslim University on 24 April 2019 on corruption prevention in the regional head election. Twelve participants suggested that the *qanun* regulating money politics may prevent the practice of money politics in the elections. Similarly, two participants suggested a special institution that oversees the practice of money politics. Four participants suggested that the elections be carried out by members of the council (not direct election). The application of such a *qanun* is aimed at breaking the chain of money politics in society during the political contest such as the regional head and legislative elections. With the existence of such a *qanun*, we would be able to observe the effectiveness of the money politics prevention. Constitutionally, money politics is included in criminal law and Sharia law. Since the enactment of Sharia in Aceh, there are several *qanun* that has been implemented to prohibit *khalwat* (seclusion between unmarried couple), adultery, *khamar* (liquor), and *maisir* (gambling). The *qanun* on money politics can be specified in the form of punishment for money politics perpetrators such as disqualification of the regent candidate and sanctions for proposing party by ceasing the right to propose the regent candidate in the next election.

The enactment of *qanun* regulating money politics in 23 regencies or cities in Aceh will force the political parties to recruit high competence and honest candidates for the regent. The party also has an important role in creating a democratic political climate and eliminating transactional political behaviors. The mechanism of a *qanun* regulating money politics, which will be designed and implemented in Aceh, can be seen in the scheme below:

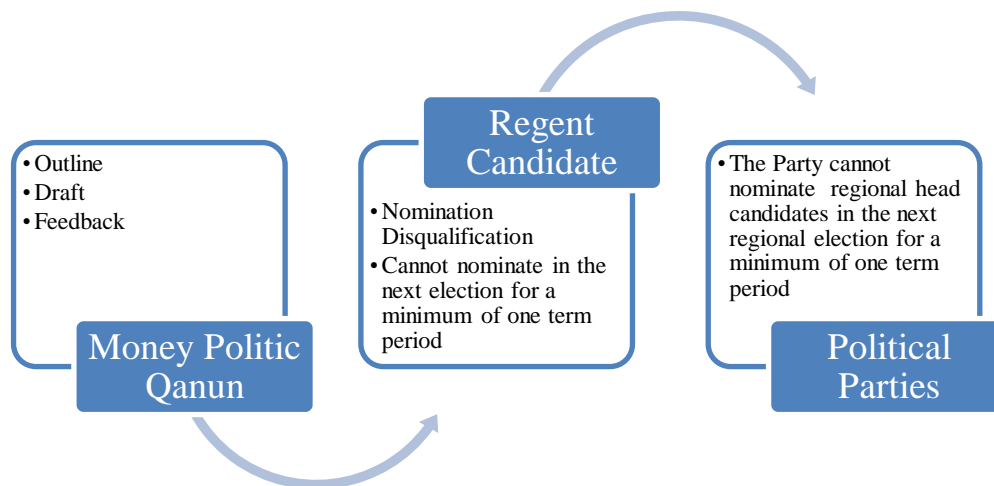


Figure 1: Mechanism of a *Qanun* on Money Politics

Conceptually, the presence of such a *qanun* is an innovation to anticipate the massive practice of money politics during the political contest. This *qanun* also supports the weaknesses of the current regional and legislative election regulations in executing various practices of money politics. The money politics has caused problems in political competition and damaged the ongoing democratic system. The *qanun* on money politic is expected to be the main instrument against the prevention of transactional politic and money politics in Aceh and set to become a role model for other regions.

4.5. The Impact of Money Politics on the Quality of Democracy in Bireuen Election

The practice of money politics in society is a political reality that often befalls in every political contestation. This money politics does not necessarily surface up by itself but is often triggered by both internal and external triggers. Based on the interviews with NGO activist, legislative candidates, politician, ex-politician on 27-28 May 2019 in Bireuen, money politics has a devastating effect on the political order and creates social unrest in society. It

changes the orientation of one's behavior to be pragmatic in choosing the regional leaders. Ideally, in choosing leaders, one must look at their track record, vision, and mission and not on the money they gave away.

The behavior of money politics in the society changes the political orientation of the society towards pragmatic, opportunistic, and apathetic behaviors. The pragmatic attitude of the people in the Bireuen district can be seen during the regional executive and legislative elections. This was revealed during the FGD at Al-Muslim University on 24 April 2019. Eleven participants explained that the community experienced moral degradation due to the elections. People tend to be pragmatic, only prioritize profit, and do not think about the region. Two participants also cited that the community had no shame in infringing the law, social and religious norms. The other two participants revealed that the community no longer put honesty first in their attitude. Furthermore, one participant disclosed that the political paradigm of the society had been damaged. Lastly, there was one participant who did not provide answers and one participant who confirmed all the statements above regarding the impact of money politics in Bireuen.

Money politics also has a social impact. Six participants mentioned that the community no longer prefers honesty. Six participants assumed that the community lost confidence in the democratic system in the elections. Four participants answered that the community suffered from mental and moral damage. The other two participants, on the other hand, have different opinions. They argued that money politics has no social impact and influence. Indirectly, money politics carried out by the political elites have created a new culture in democracy, the culture of money politics.

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that money politics increasingly damages the public morals, encourages the community to ignore the law and religious norms, and makes people lose faith in regional leaders.

5. Conclusion

Money politics in Bireuen district is a crucial problem that needs to be resolved. This study offers several recommendations to prevent money politics in the presidential election, legislative election, and regional head election. There is a need to establish *qanun* to regulate money politics violation by adhering to the Aceh Government Regulation. The *qanun* aims at breaking the chain of the massive system of money politics during the election in Aceh. Academic experts should be involved in drafting the *qanun* to govern the practice of regional head and legislative elections in Aceh.

This research is very limited in its scope of the study, only examines the regional election, money politics and corruption in the city of Bireuen. Nevertheless, the results of the study have illustrated that the problem of money politics in the Bireuen District Election is severe. This study also indicated that money politics is not only practiced in Bireuen but also highly possible to be found in other regencies/cities across Aceh. Therefore, future studies should be conducted in other regencies/cities in Aceh.

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