

## Exploring Transactional Political Dynamics in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Toraja Utara Regency: A Social Exchange Theory.

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**Abstract.** *This study analyzes the patterns of transactional politics between candidates and donors in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections in Toraja Utara Regency. By adopting the perspective of social exchange theory, this research reveals the dynamics of the relationship between candidates and donors in soliciting financial support for their campaigns. A qualitative descriptive method was employed to gather data through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The research findings indicate that the required funding for candidates ranged from 50 to 80 billion IDR during the 2020 regional elections. This study illustrates that fundraising through family/relatives is carried out based on the strength of emotional ties and shared values within Toraja culture, while businesspersons offer support in order to gain future political advantages and power. The theoretical implications of this research link the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic exchanges, highlighting their impact on political dynamics and social change in the region.*

**Keywords:** *Regional Elections, transactional politics, social exchange theory, fundraising, Toraja Utara.*

### INTRODUCTION

Regional Head Elections (Pemilihan Kepala Daerah or Pemilukada) constitute a crucial aspect of the democratic process involving community participation in determining local leadership (Winengan, 2018). In this context, financial support plays a pivotal role in facilitating campaigns and mobilizing voter support (Ardiyanto, 2022; Salleh, 2022). Previous research has acknowledged the strategic role of financial resources in influencing Pemilukada outcomes, yet the dynamics of transactional politics behind the exchange of financial support between candidates and donors have not been thoroughly explored (Andrias and Nurohman, 2013; Harbiyanto, 2020; Koeswara et al., 2014; Sondakh, 2018).

Understanding the transactional political relationship between candidates and donors in Pemilukada is essential to delve into the dynamics of local democracy (Ata, 2022; Misra et al., 2021). This study holds significant relevance in enriching the understanding of how donors contribute to the campaign process and how candidates mobilize financial resources to achieve victory. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, this research aims to bridge knowledge gaps and provide a more comprehensive insight into the dynamics of financial support exchange in the Pemilukada process.

Literature review reveals that financial resources have a significant impact on Pemilukada (Cahyaningsih et al., 2019; Putri and Dwipriandi, 2021; Setiawan and Setyorini, 2018; Thamrin et al., 2020), particularly in amplifying campaign messages, enhancing candidate visibility, and influencing voter preferences (Hidayat, 2009; Khairi, 2020; Koeswara et al., 2014; Noor, 2016). Previous research also underscores the importance of social relationships and networks in garnering financial support (Salleh, 2022; Susanti and Fahmi, 2022; YUNITA, 2018). However, a deeper investigation into how the actual exchange of financial support occurs between candidates and donors remains limited.

The primary objective of this study is to unearth and analyze transactional political patterns in the exchange of financial support between candidates and donors in Pemilukada of Toraja Utara regency, Indonesia. This research aims to define the strategies employed by candidates in gathering financial support and to identify the implications of this transactional political relationship on the overall dynamics of Pemilukada. By involving the perspectives of various stakeholders engaged in the exchange, this research will yield a more comprehensive understanding of patterns of financial support exchange and their impact on the local democratic process.

Utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach and employing the data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman (Miles and Huberman, 1994), this study aspires to provide a deeper insight into the dynamics of transactional politics in Pemilukada. It is hoped that the findings of this research will offer a valuable contribution to enriching the literature on political-financial relationships in the context of local democracy and contribute to a more holistic understanding of Pemilukada dynamics.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to comprehend and analyze the dynamics of transactional politics between candidates and donors in Regional Head Elections (Pemilihan Kepala Daerah or Pemilukada). The qualitative approach was chosen due to its capacity to deeply explore complex and dynamic phenomena, such as the exchange of financial support within the context of local politics (Siregar, 2020). In the qualitative approach, researchers strive to understand the meanings and interpretations provided by the actors involved in the research process.

Data collection is conducted through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. In-depth interviews are conducted with key informants from three main groups: candidates, members of the campaign strategy teams for candidate pairs, and donors. In-depth interviews enable researchers to gain a deeper insight into the motivations, strategies, and dynamics of the transactional political relationships that occur. Observations are performed to understand the social context and interactions within the *Pemilukada*. Meanwhile, documentation is employed to gather data about campaign financing policies and regulations, as well as data related to the *Pemilukada*.

The collected data is analyzed using the data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman. This approach involves steps such as data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involves data collection, noting, transcription of interviews, and grouping data based on emerging themes and concepts. Data display is carried out through tables, graphs, and narratives that aid in visualizing and further understanding the findings. Conclusion drawing entails interpreting the results of data analysis, connecting them with relevant theories, and formulating findings that enhance the understanding of transactional politics in *Pemilukada*.

Through the qualitative descriptive approach and the data analysis model by Miles and Huberman, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of financial support exchange between candidates and donors. It is hoped that the research methodology employed will enable researchers to uncover layers of complexity in this transactional political relationship and yield findings that contribute to a richer comprehension of *Pemilukada* and the overall local democratic process.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results and discussion section of this research provides a scientific foundation for comprehending the main findings regarding the transactional political patterns between Candidates and Donors in the simultaneous 2020 Regional Head Elections (*Pemilihan Kepala Daerah* or *Pemilukda*) in Toraja Utara Regency. This section will comprehensively present the outcomes of the acquired data analysis and discuss the implications of these findings within both theoretical and practical contexts.

**Research Findings:** This study yields an in-depth understanding of how transactional political patterns unfolded during the 2020 Regional Head Elections (Pemilihan Kepala Daerah or Pemilukda) in Toraja Utara Regency. Within this research, it was revealed that Candidates heavily rely on financial and political support from Donors, comprising family/relatives and businesspersons. The funds utilized by Candidates for campaigning and political activities varied between 50 to 80 billion Indonesian Rupiah. In addition to the Candidates' personal funds, Donors from family/relatives and business circles significantly contributed to the fundraising efforts..

**Transactional Political Patterns:** From the perspective of social exchange theory (Cook et al., 2013), the transactional political patterns between Candidates and Donors in the 2020 Regional Head Elections (Pemilihan Kepala Daerah or Pemilukda) in Toraja Utara Regency represent a form of reciprocal relationship. This exchange involves crucial elements such as rewards, costs, and profits. The focus of this exchange lies in Candidates' efforts to secure victory in the Pemilukada through financial and political support from Donors, who in turn expect to receive rewards both in economic and non-economic forms.

**Social Exchange and Donor Relations:** This study reveals that the social exchange between Candidates and Donors takes place in the form of direct exchange, where reciprocal relationships are established without the need for written agreements. These relationships are built on trust and commitment between Candidates and Donors. Donors from family/relatives have strong connections with Candidates due to emotional factors, mutual trust, and the shared values of unity prevalent in Toraja culture. As members of the extended family, Donors believe that their support will assist the Candidate in achieving victory and elevating the family's prestige.

**Impact of Pemilukada Victory:** The impact of winning the Regional Head Elections on the relationship between Candidates and Donors undergoes a shift from intrinsic to extrinsic exchange. If the Candidate is elected, this relationship transitions towards extrinsic exchange, wherein Donors anticipate rewards in both material and non-material forms. The Candidate's victory in Pemilukda is expected to bring benefits to Donors, such as political positions, business opportunities, and influence in political decision-making. Additionally, the Candidate also requires active support from Donors after being elected to ensure power consolidation and leadership stability.

**Exchange Patterns with Businesspersons:** In the exchange with businesspersons, Candidates establish relationships based on existing social connections and networks. Businesspersons, as Donors, provide financial support considering the Candidate's commitment and potential success in the Pemilukada. This exchange also generates a circuit of capital accumulation, where political funding yields political power, which in turn is used to garner more support and resources. Donors from the business community also play a crucial role in assisting in the pairing of the Regent and Deputy Regent candidates and influencing political party endorsements.

**Implications of the Findings:** These findings hold significant implications both within the local and theoretical contexts. Locally, these findings depict the dynamics of the relationship between Candidates and Donors within the realm of local politics. It underscores the pivotal roles of family/relatives and businesspersons in supporting Candidates during the Pemilukda. The theoretical implications highlight that political exchange in Pemilukda is far more intricate than mere financial transactions. This exchange involves interconnected social, political, and economic dynamics.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research has provided a profound insight into the dynamics of transactional political patterns in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Toraja Utara Regency. The findings from the results and discussion section reveal the complexity of exchanges between Candidates and Donors, especially family/relatives and businesspersons, encompassing social, political, and economic dimensions. The implications of these findings contribute valuable insights to a deeper understanding of local political dynamics and play a role in advancing and broadening social exchange theory within the realm of politics. This research encourages a more holistic perspective on the intricate interactions between political actors and financial supporters in the process of local leadership selection.

These findings not only respond to micro-level transactional political practices at the local level but also offer broader insights into how social, political, and economic factors intertwine to shape the political dynamics in Pemilukada. In this regard, this study holds potential positive impacts in driving reforms and improvements in the local political process, as well as raising public awareness about the implications of transactional political patterns.

Furthermore, the results of this research contribute to the development of social exchange theory within a political context. The implications of these findings support social exchange theory in shaping a more comprehensive view of how political exchange involves not only financial transactions but also portrays the dynamics of social relationships, political networks, and pursuit of gains by all involved parties.

Overall, this research opens new horizons in comprehending the complexity of transactional political patterns in Pemilukada, especially in local contexts like Toraja Utara Regency. The implications of these findings provide a foundation to delve deeper into how transactional political practices can impact social and political dynamics at the local level. Thus, this study holds significant importance in efforts to enhance, reform, and improve the integrity of the local leadership selection process, while also offering a richer understanding of the intricate interactions between political actors and financial supporters..

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