

La intersección entre tecnología, política monetaria y democracia en Indonesia

The Intersection of Technology, Money Politics, and Democracy in Indonesia

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Recibido/Received: 11/12/2023. Aceptado/Accepted: 20/12/2024.

Cómo citar/How to cite: Fatimah, Siti, Kushandajani, Fitriyah & Adnan, Muhammad
(2025) The intersection of Technology, Money Politics and Democracy in Indonesia.
Sociología y Tecnociencia, 15 (1), 202-222. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24197/st.1.2025.202-222>.

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Resumen: Este artículo investiga la intersección entre tecnología, política monetaria y democracia en Indonesia, centrándose en las elecciones regionales de la provincia de Java Central. El estudio pretende entender cómo influyen los avances tecnológicos en la política monetaria y en la integridad democrática. Se utilizó un enfoque cualitativo descriptivo, recopilando datos primarios mediante entrevistas con analistas políticos, políticos locales, expertos en tecnociencia y líderes comunitarios, y datos secundarios de la bibliografía existente. Los resultados revelan que, si bien la tecnología puede mejorar la transparencia y la participación de los votantes, también facilita la política del dinero a través de donaciones anónimas y desinformación. La investigación pone de relieve la práctica persistente de la política del dinero impulsada por las disparidades económicas, que socava los valores democráticos. El estudio concluye con recomendaciones de marcos reguladores sólidos y esfuerzos de colaboración entre las partes interesadas para mejorar la integridad electoral.

Palabras clave: Democracia, política monetaria, tecnología, elecciones, política

Abstract: The paper investigates the intersection of technology, money politics, and democracy in Indonesia, focusing on regional elections in Central Java Province. The study aims to understand how technological advancements influence money politics and impact democratic integrity. A descriptive qualitative approach was used, gathering primary data through interviews with political analysts, local politicians, technoscience experts, and community leaders, and secondary data from existing literature. The findings reveal that while technology can enhance transparency and voter engagement, it also facilitates money politics through anonymous donations and misinformation. The research highlights the persistent practice of money politics driven by economic disparities, undermining democratic values. The study concludes with recommendations for robust regulatory frameworks and collaborative efforts among stakeholders to enhance electoral integrity.

Keywords: Democracy, Money Politics, Technology, Election, Politics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a political system designed to produce leadership that can openly respond to the challenges and problems faced by the people, and it is perceived as inclusive by all stakeholders (Anggono & Wahanisa, 2022; Kusumasari, 2020). At its core, democracy is founded on principles such as political equality, citizen participation, and the protection of human rights. These principles ensure that all individuals have an equal say in the governance of their country, fostering a political environment where leaders are accountable to the people. In Indonesia, the implementation of democracy as a state ideology encounters numerous challenges (Gonschorek, 2021). Since the fall of Suharto's authoritarian regime in 1998, Indonesia has made significant strides towards democratization, adopting reforms that aim to promote political freedom and transparency. However, these challenges pose significant risks to the stability and effectiveness of democratic governance, often leading to its weakening or failure (Misran et al., 2021). One of the major contributing factors to the erosion of democracy is the pervasive practice of money politics, which undermines the integrity of the electoral system (Reuter, 2015).

Money politics is a detrimental practice within the electoral system that undermines democratic integrity. In an immature democratic system such as Indonesia, money politics is extensively used to garner support, which distorts the

democratic process (Feillard, 2013; Kusumasari, 2020). At the local level, this issue is particularly pronounced, as politicians with substantial economic resources exploit opportunities to gain electoral advantages (Simandjuntak, 2012). Despite being illegal under Indonesian law, as stipulated in Law No. 3/1999 Article 73/3, money politics persists, with legal repercussions for those who engage in or accept electoral bribes (Hadiz, 2012; Simandjuntak, 2012). In regional head elections, money politics is a strategic tool for mobilizing communities and influencing voters, thereby degrading democratic values (Reuter, 2015; Saraswati, 2021).

The foundational concept of democracy is rooted in rights-based politics, where individuals are presumed to understand their interests better than anyone else (Gonschorek, 2021; Hadiz, 2007). However, democracy falters when individuals engage in money politics for short-term gains, sacrificing their human and constitutional rights for immediate benefits (Reuter, 2015). This practice leads to a decrease in voter responsiveness to candidates' programs and policies, focusing instead on material benefits (Gonschorek, 2021; Mietzner, 2012). The prevalence of money politics not only damages national morals but also destabilizes the democratic structure, making elections less free and fair due to the influence of money (Hadiz, 2012; Hellmann, 2014; Kusumasari, 2020).

The rise of technology in modern electoral processes introduces both opportunities and challenges. Technological advancements have the potential to enhance transparency and voter engagement (da Silva Neto & Chiarini, 2021) but also present new avenues for the perpetuation of money politics. Digital platforms can facilitate anonymous donations and the dissemination of misinformation, which can manipulate voter behavior and undermine electoral integrity (Tenove, et al., 2018; Benkler, et al., 2020). In the post-truth era, characterized by the dominance of subjective truths over objective facts, public trust is influenced more by emotional appeals than by scientific evidence, making it easier for money politics to flourish through technological means.

The primary objectives of this research are twofold. First, to understand how technology influences money politics within the context of Indonesia's democratic processes. This includes examining how digital platforms and technological tools are used to mobilize financial resources and disseminate political messages. Second, to analyze the impact of these technological influences on democratic integrity, voter behavior, and election outcomes, particularly in the regional elections in Central Java Province.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Democracy is a system where the government is controlled by the people, and where the people are considered equal in exercising that control (Gonschorek, 2021; Mietzner, 2012; Suaib et al., 2017). However, unequal access to political funding results in an unhealthy playing field (Saidi et al., 2021). The rapid growth of

campaign spending in many countries has exacerbated the problem of political funding and spending (Kusumasari, 2020). In Indonesia, large amounts of political funding in some election campaigns make it difficult for political parties to establish equitable cooperation and funding assistance relationships, including securing large private donor funding to compete in the electoral process (Incerti, 2018; Soberman & Sadoulet, 2007).

The financing of political party campaign funds and election campaigns must be based on principles and rules (Kusumasari, 2020; Zhirnov, 2016). One essential principle is a reasonable balance between public and private funding (Darry & Permana, 2019; Gonschorek, 2021). Proportional criteria in the current electoral context relate to distributions and contributions by related parties, applicable rules on private donations, thresholds on parties, and campaign finance expenditures related to election campaigns (Darry & Permana, 2019; Gonschorek, 2021; Mietzner, 2012). This includes complete transparency of the identity of givers and supporters in campaign financing, as well as the establishment of independent auditing authorities and sanctions for parties and candidates who break the rules (Reuter, 2015; Saraswati, 2021).

In its implementation, political parties require adequate funding (Reuter, 2015; Saidi et al., 2021; Saraswati, 2021). The relationship between funding and politics is controversial, and there is much debate about the role and relevance of funding's influence on democratic political processes and the unauthorized personal enrichment of politicians (Davies, 2021). While the non-transparent aspects of political funding should not be overlooked, the relevance of funding goes far beyond unauthorized sources and flows to parties and politicians (Kusumasari, 2020). The scope of political funding has broader relevance in the context of democratic functioning and should therefore be viewed more broadly than simply debating the non-transparency of political party funding (Davies, 2021).

Traditionally, political funding in parties has been exclusively through membership fees, but this is no longer widely applied by most parties in modern democracies (Putra et al., n.d.; Septiadi et al., 2021). However, this does not rule out the possibility of political funding from the private sector apart from membership fees, both from inside and outside the party (Kusumasari, 2020). Additionally, donations from elected party members in both the executive and legislature from allowance deductions may also be a form of hidden public funding that is difficult to publicize with the independence and mandate of party rules, especially when payments are an obligation from the party that politicians must fulfill (Anggono & Wahanisa, 2022; Hellmann, 2014).

Other sources of political funding, such as donations, face risks in building relationships that involve monetary donations and specific political decisions (Darry & Permana, 2019; Mietzner, 2012). In this context, the misuse of political funding may be enough to reduce public trust in the political system and its political actors, thereby undermining democratic legitimacy (Misran et al., 2021; Suprianto et al.,

2020). In practice, the implementation of political funding through donations has increased and become a trend in political funding (Saidi et al., 2021; Saraswati, 2021; Siahaan & Tampubolon, 2021).

There are restrictions on certain sources and amounts of private donations, while state funds must be allocated on the condition that political party accounts are subject to external audits by specialized government agencies (Darry & Permana, 2019; Saidi et al., 2021; Saraswati, 2021; Siahaan & Tampubolon, 2021). Transparency of political party funding must be ensured to avoid the possibility of undesirable influence of funding on party politics and policies. Any party funding system and restrictions imposed on political parties and their financial sources will only be effective with strong control mechanisms and sanctions for violations (Putra et al., n.d.; Siahaan & Tampubolon, 2021).

Party funding generally refers to all regulations of the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 7/2017 on general elections and/or legal documents related to the funding and financing operations of political parties. The regulatory framework for political funding includes constitutional provisions, laws on political parties and laws on political party financing and election campaigns passed by the legislature, and all other laws that impact political party financing (Kusumasari, 2020).

Technological advancements have introduced a dual role in enhancing and undermining electoral integrity. On the one hand, technology can increase transparency, streamline funding processes, and facilitate greater voter engagement (Simon et al., 2017; da Silva Neto & Chiarini, 2021). Digital platforms can make it easier for voters to access information about candidates and their funding sources, thereby promoting accountability (Simon et al., 2017). On the other hand, technology can also be used to perpetuate money politics through anonymous donations, spread misinformation, and manipulate voter behavior (Tenove, et al., 2018; Benkler, et al., 2020). The ease with which digital platforms can be exploited to disseminate false information and engage in unethical funding practices presents significant challenges to maintaining electoral integrity.

This review will use the concepts discussed to analyze the context of Indonesia, examining how technological influences intersect with traditional political funding mechanisms to impact democratic processes. By understanding the dual role of technology, this research aims to provide insights into how Indonesia can better manage political funding and enhance electoral integrity.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the dynamics of money politics and the role of technoscience within the implementation of democracy at the regional level in Indonesia. Qualitative research aims to understand and classify the meanings behind human behaviors and interactions in specific situations, according to the researcher's perspective (Levitt et al., 2018).

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative methods do not rely on statistical procedures or numerical analysis but instead focus on in-depth insights through various qualitative techniques.

Data collection for this study involved both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through interviews with relevant informants, including political analysts, local politicians, technoscience experts, and community leaders. These interviews provided firsthand accounts and insights into the practices and impacts of money politics and the influence of technology in regional elections. Secondary data were obtained from a comprehensive review of existing literature, including books, academic journals, and articles that discuss democracy, political funding, money politics, and the role of technoscience in elections (Levitt et al., 2018; Haradhan, 2018).

The research was conducted in Central Java Province, a region known for its vibrant political landscape and recurrent issues with money politics. This location was chosen to provide a representative case study of the broader challenges facing democratic processes in Indonesia. Data analysis followed an interactive process that continued until saturation was achieved, ensuring a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under study. The steps in data analysis included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Levitt et al., 2018).

The process of data collection and analysis involved several key activities. First, data were written, edited, and classified according to relevant themes related to money politics, technoscience, and democracy. Next, the data were reduced to focus on the most significant findings, which were then presented in a coherent narrative. The role of technoscience, particularly digital platforms and information technologies, was analyzed in terms of both its potential to enhance electoral transparency and its susceptibility to misuse for perpetuating money politics. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified through cross-checking with interviewees and triangulating with secondary sources. This approach ensured that the findings were robust and reliable, providing a comprehensive understanding of how money politics and technoscience interact to affect democratic integrity, particularly in the context of election funding in the post-truth era.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Democracy, electoral and money politics in Indonesia

Regional head elections, known locally as *pilkada*, serve as a crucial mechanism for realizing direct democracy at the regional level in Indonesia. These direct local elections are a significant aspect of the implementation of local autonomy, ensuring that leadership at the local level is closely aligned with the aspirations and needs of the community (Purwaningsih & Widodo, 2021). Through *pilkada*, citizens have the opportunity to directly elect leaders who will have a substantial impact on their daily lives, welfare, and overall community

benefits. This process ideally supports a governance model that is responsive and accountable to the people's needs and expectations.

However, a significant concern that arises in the context of regional head elections is the pervasive practice of money politics. This practice fundamentally undermines voter objectivity and the integrity of the electoral process. Instead of electing the most qualified leaders based on their capabilities and policy proposals, the electoral outcomes are often skewed in favor of those candidates who have the financial resources to spend the most money on buying votes. As a result, the elected leaders are frequently those who invest substantial amounts of money to secure votes, rather than those who are best qualified to serve and govern effectively. Money politics leads to irrational voter behavior, whereby voters become pragmatic and tend to support candidates who offer immediate financial or material incentives such as money, goods, or other benefits (Davies, 2021; Gonschorek, 2021; Septiadi et al., 2021). This practice significantly diminishes the quality of democracy, as it creates a scenario where financial power takes precedence over merit and qualifications.

The practice of money politics is typically driven by several factors, including the mutual benefits perceived by both voters and candidates, public apathy towards political processes, and declining welfare levels that make individuals more susceptible to financial incentives. Voters, especially those facing economic hardships, might view money or material goods offered by candidates as immediate relief from their financial struggles. Candidates, on the other hand, see money politics as an effective strategy to secure votes quickly and efficiently, especially in regions where economic disparities are significant.

The cultural entrenchment of money politics in the electoral process directly undermines core democratic values. Many regional elections in Indonesia are plagued by allegations and instances of money politics (Siahaan & Tampubolon, 2021). For example, the Central Java Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) identified 23 cases of alleged money politics during the 2020 simultaneous regional elections. These violations were reported from the "quiet period" leading up to the voting day, indicating the widespread and systematic nature of the problem. According to Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), money politics frequently occurs right before or on voting day, a practice commonly referred to as "*serangan fajar*" or "dawn attacks".

Typically, candidates do not directly engage in the distribution of money or goods; instead, influential public figures within certain areas act as intermediaries. These intermediaries distribute funds based on their intimate knowledge of voter behavior and preferences. This practice is particularly effective in targeting loyal voters and those in financial need, such as the poor and students without regular income. By leveraging the influence of these intermediaries, candidates can efficiently spread their resources to maximize electoral support without directly tarnishing their public image. Research indicates that the acceptance of money

and goods by voters is often motivated by declining marginal utility income. This concept suggests that as income levels decline, the relative value of additional income or goods increases, making the poor more likely to accept financial incentives from candidates. High poverty levels and weak governance are closely linked, creating an environment where money politics can thrive (Jatmika et al., 2021). For many voters, the money or goods offered by candidates carry various meanings. For some, it is perceived as a demonstration of the candidate's superiority and capability to lead. For others, it is seen as a form of repayment or compensation for their support. In some cases, it is viewed as a necessary act by the candidate to secure their position and fulfill their obligations to their supporters.

However, the perception of money politics can vary significantly between informed and uninformed voters. Informed voters, who are more aware of the ethical and legal implications of such practices, may view candidates who engage in money politics as corrupt and unprepared to lead effectively. They might see these acts as indicative of a candidate's lack of genuine commitment to public service and good governance. Conversely, uninformed communities might interpret the gifts and money as a sign of goodwill or even as a rightful entitlement. For these voters, the acceptance of such gifts does not necessarily imply support for corrupt practices, but rather a pragmatic approach to immediate economic relief.

The complexity of money politics and its deep entrenchment at various levels of the electoral process—from candidates to intermediaries to voters—makes it challenging to mitigate its impact on election outcomes. This complexity is further exacerbated by the various socioeconomic factors that drive individuals to participate in and perpetuate money politics. Efforts to influence or change voter behavior in this context must address the underlying economic disparities and governance issues that make money politics an attractive option for both candidates and voters.

2. Technological Influence on Election

Digital platforms play a significant role in facilitating political funding, but they also introduce various risks such as anonymous donations. These platforms make it easier for candidates to receive financial support without adequate transparency, which can subsequently lead to unregulated and potentially illegal contributions (Tenove, 2018). The anonymity provided by online donations poses significant challenges to the monitoring and regulation of political funding, as it obscures the sources of financial contributions and allows for the influx of untraceable money into electoral campaigns. This lack of transparency undermines the integrity of the electoral process and makes it difficult to ensure that all contributions are lawful and ethical.

The role of digital platforms in political funding cannot be overstated. These platforms provide a convenient and efficient means for candidates to solicit and receive donations from a wide range of sources. However, this convenience comes at a cost. The anonymity afforded by online transactions makes it possible for individuals and organizations to contribute large sums of money without disclosing their identities. This lack of accountability can lead to a situation where illegal or unethical contributions go undetected, thereby compromising the fairness of the electoral process.

Technological interventions in political funding face substantial transparency and regulatory challenges. The ease of online transactions and the global nature of digital platforms complicate the enforcement of local election laws. For instance, regulations may struggle to keep pace with the innovative methods used for fundraising and expenditure. The rapid evolution of digital technologies means that new methods of fundraising and spending are constantly emerging, making it difficult for regulators to stay ahead of the curve. Effective oversight mechanisms are crucial to ensuring transparency in political funding. However, current regulatory frameworks often lack the necessary provisions to address the complexities introduced by digital technologies.

One of the key challenges in regulating digital political funding is the cross-border nature of online transactions. Donations can come from anywhere in the world, making it difficult for local authorities to track and verify the sources of these funds. This global dimension adds another layer of complexity to the task of ensuring that all contributions are legal and transparent. Moreover, the speed at which online transactions can be conducted makes it challenging for regulators to monitor and respond to suspicious activities in real-time.

The spread of fake news and misinformation is another critical issue that is exacerbated by technology. Digital platforms enable the rapid dissemination of false information, which can significantly influence voter behavior. Misinformation campaigns often aim to manipulate public perception and voting decisions by spreading misleading or false narratives about candidates or political issues (Guess & Lyons, 2020). Such practices not only distort the democratic process but also undermine the credibility of elections and elected officials. The ability to spread false information quickly and widely means that even baseless rumors can have a substantial impact on public opinion and voter behavior.

Misinformation is a powerful tool in the hands of those who seek to influence elections through unscrupulous means. By spreading false or misleading information, these actors can create confusion and uncertainty among voters, making it difficult for them to make informed decisions. The anonymity and reach of digital platforms make it easy to launch misinformation campaigns without fear of repercussions. This anonymity also makes it challenging for authorities to identify and hold accountable those responsible for spreading false information.

Technology also facilitates money politics by enabling the spread of misinformation to influence elections. Candidates and their supporters use digital tools to propagate false narratives, attack opponents, and manipulate voter sentiment. These tactics can sway public opinion and voter behavior, making it easier for money politics to thrive in the digital age. The anonymity and reach of online platforms make it challenging to trace the origins of such campaigns and hold perpetrators accountable. The ability to influence voter behavior through digital means has made technology a double-edged sword in the context of elections.

The use of technology in elections is not inherently negative. Digital platforms can also enhance transparency and voter engagement when used responsibly (Unver, 2017). However, the potential for abuse is significant, and the consequences of such abuse can be severe. The spread of false information and the use of digital tools to manipulate voter sentiment are just a few examples of how technology can be used to undermine the integrity of elections. The challenge for regulators and policymakers is to find ways to harness the positive aspects of technology while mitigating its potential for misuse.

3. Case Study: Central Java Elections

The 2020 regional elections in Central Java unveiled significant instances of money politics that were facilitated through the use of technology, particularly the advent of the internet and digital media. The Central Java Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) reported numerous cases of alleged money politics, which highlighted the role of digital platforms in organizing and executing these activities (Kompas, 2020). These findings underscore the dual role of technology in both enabling and combating electoral malpractices. On the one hand, technology can be leveraged to enhance transparency and streamline electoral processes; on the other hand, it can also be misused to facilitate corrupt practices such as money politics.

Picture 1: Online Crowdfunding for Supporting Particular Election Candidate



Source: Saputra, 2018

In Central Java, money politics was frequently executed through intermediaries who used digital platforms to coordinate the distribution of funds. These intermediaries, often influential local public figures, targeted specific voter groups based on their understanding of voter behavior. Rather than expanding the candidate's support base (Davies, 2021), their strategy focused on reinforcing existing voter preferences by distributing money or goods to loyal voters and those in financial need. A notable example is the online crowdfunding effort launched by the campaign team for a candidate, where supporters were invited to contribute through a platform called *Saweranjateng.id*, as depicted in Figure 1. Although donations were not mandatory, the campaign emphasized that those who supported key policies—such as abolishing the *Kartu Tani* program and promoting clean governance—should consider contributing financially. This approach ensured that financial incentives were directed where they would have the most significant impact, thereby maximizing the influence of money on the election results.

The role of *Botoh*, or local financiers, is particularly notable in the context of Central Java's election funding. *Botoh* are influential figures who provide financial support to candidates, often with the expectation of substantial returns if their supported candidates win. These financiers utilize technology in several ways to bolster their efforts. For instance, they use digital tools to survey voter tendencies, allowing them to identify and target key demographics that are most likely to be influenced by financial incentives. Additionally, they coordinate the distribution of funds through digital platforms, which streamlines the process and ensures that the money reaches its intended recipients efficiently.

Figure 2: Black Campaign Conducted by *Botoh* in Twitter

Source: Wibisono, 2018

Moreover, *Botoh* often manipulate public opinion through digital propaganda, spreading favorable narratives about their supported candidates while discrediting their opponents (Abiyyu, 2022; Darry & Permmana, 2019). For example, during the Central Java gubernatorial election (see Figure 2), *Botoh* used social media platforms to undermine the popularity of a particular candidate. One such instance involved a Twitter account, @kakekdetektif, which posted a rumor alleging that the candidate had engaged in an affair and stayed overnight in a hotel room with someone other than their spouse. This fabricated story quickly gained traction, leading many voters to question the candidate's moral integrity and deem them unfit to lead Central Java. The effectiveness of this digital smear campaign highlights the dangerous power of *Botoh* in shaping public perception and influencing election outcomes through the strategic use of misinformation.

The involvement of *Botoh* in campaign fundraising exemplifies the intersection of money politics and technology. Digital tools enhance the effectiveness of traditional electioneering methods, making it easier for *Botoh* to mobilize resources and influence voter behavior. This technological enhancement allows *Botoh* to operate with greater efficiency and precision, thereby increasing their impact on the election outcomes. The ability to quickly disseminate funds and propaganda through digital channels gives *Botoh* a significant advantage in the electoral process, enabling them to shape the political landscape to their advantage.

The case of Central Java demonstrates the complexities and challenges associated with regulating money politics in the digital age. The use of technology in electoral processes presents both opportunities and risks. On one hand, digital platforms can enhance transparency, facilitate efficient fundraising, and engage voters in meaningful ways. On the other hand, they can also be exploited to conduct illicit activities such as money politics, making it difficult for regulatory bodies to ensure a fair and transparent election.

In the 2020 Central Java elections, technology played a crucial role in both facilitating and exposing money politics. The Bawaslu's ability to identify and report numerous cases of money politics highlights the potential for technology to aid in the detection and investigation of electoral malpractices. However, the pervasive use of digital platforms by intermediaries and *Botoh* to distribute funds and manipulate voter behavior underscores the need for robust regulatory frameworks and effective oversight mechanisms. Ensuring transparency and accountability in political funding requires continuous adaptation to keep pace with technological advancements.

Botoh's involvement in the Central Java elections also sheds light on the broader implications of money politics on democratic processes. By providing substantial financial support and using technology to influence voter behavior, *Botoh* can significantly skew election results. This undermines the principle of fair competition and erodes public trust in the electoral system. The expectation of returns on their investment motivates *Botoh* to ensure their candidates win, often at the expense of democratic integrity and ethical standards.

4. Enhancing Democratic Integrity through Technology

Based on the discussion above, this article argues that potential technological interventions, such as blockchain, can significantly enhance transparency in electoral processes. Blockchain technology offers a decentralized and tamper-proof method of recording transactions, which makes it particularly suitable for tracking political donations and expenditures. By implementing blockchain technology, it would be possible to ensure that all financial contributions are both transparent and traceable. This transparency would reduce the likelihood of anonymous and illicit funding, thereby addressing one of the major challenges associated with political funding in elections.

Blockchain technology, at its core, operates as a distributed ledger that records all transactions across a network of computers in a manner that is immutable and transparent (Sarmah, 2018). Each transaction is recorded in a block, which is then linked to the previous block, forming a chain. This structure makes it extremely difficult for any single entity to alter the records without the consensus of the network. For electoral processes, this means that political donations and expenditures can be recorded in a way that is transparent and accessible to the public. Every transaction would be visible, ensuring that the

sources of political funding are known and that the flow of money is traceable. This level of transparency can deter illegal activities, such as vote-buying and the use of illicit funds, by making it more difficult to conceal such actions.

Policymakers should consider developing robust regulations to address the unique challenges posed by digital technologies in elections. This includes setting clear guidelines for online political donations, implementing stringent verification processes for donors, and establishing comprehensive oversight mechanisms. Clear guidelines for online donations would help ensure that all contributions are accounted for and that the identity of donors is verified. Stringent verification processes can prevent the influx of anonymous donations, ensuring that all contributions come from legitimate sources. Establishing comprehensive oversight mechanisms would enable regulatory bodies to monitor and enforce these guidelines effectively, ensuring compliance and deterring violations.

To effectively implement these measures, regulatory bodies need to be equipped with the appropriate tools and expertise. This involves investing in technology and training for regulatory officials to keep pace with advancements in digital technologies. Regulatory bodies should be able to track and analyze financial transactions in real-time, using advanced analytical tools to identify suspicious activities. Additionally, collaboration with technology experts and industry stakeholders can help in developing and refining regulatory frameworks that are both effective and adaptable to changing technological landscapes. The role of regulatory bodies is crucial in maintaining the integrity of the electoral process, and therefore, their capacity to monitor and enforce regulations must be strengthened.

Improving digital literacy among voters is also crucial to combating the negative impacts of technology on elections (Moore & Hancock, 2022; Handoko & Setyoko, 2023). Voters need to be educated on how to critically assess information, identify misinformation, and understand the implications of money politics. Digital literacy programs should be implemented at various levels, including schools, community centers, and through online platforms, to reach a broad audience and foster a more informed electorate. Digital literacy involves equipping voters with the skills to navigate the digital landscape effectively. This includes understanding how to evaluate the credibility of online information, recognizing the signs of misinformation, and being aware of the tactics used in digital propaganda. By improving digital literacy, voters can make more informed decisions and are less likely to be swayed by false information or unethical campaign practices. Educational initiatives can take various forms, such as workshops, online courses, and public awareness campaigns. These programs should aim to provide practical tools and strategies that voters can use to critically engage with digital content.

Furthermore, collaboration between government agencies, educational institutions, and civil society organizations is essential for the successful

implementation of digital literacy programs (Chohan & Hu, 2022). Government agencies can provide the necessary resources and support for these initiatives, while educational institutions can integrate digital literacy into their curricula. Civil society organizations can play a key role in outreach and engagement, particularly in reaching marginalized communities that may have limited access to formal education. By working together, these stakeholders can create a comprehensive and inclusive approach to digital literacy that empowers all voters.

The integration of digital literacy into formal education systems is particularly important. Schools and universities should include modules on digital literacy as part of their regular curricula, ensuring that students are prepared to navigate the digital world responsibly and critically. This early education can lay the foundation for lifelong critical thinking skills that are essential in a digital age. Additionally, community centers and local organizations can offer workshops and training sessions for adults, providing them with the tools they need to engage with digital content critically and responsibly.

Online platforms can also serve as valuable tools for digital literacy education (Latif et al., 2020; Zulfadli & Zuhri, 2023). Interactive courses, webinars, and e-learning modules can be made accessible to a wide audience, providing flexible and convenient learning opportunities. Social media campaigns and partnerships with influencers and public figures can help raise awareness about the importance of digital literacy and encourage broader participation in educational programs. By leveraging the reach and engagement of online platforms, digital literacy initiatives can have a far-reaching impact, empowering voters to make informed decisions and strengthening the overall integrity of the electoral process.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has delved into the complex interplay between money politics, technology, and democratic processes in regional elections in Indonesia, particularly within Central Java. The findings reveal the dual role that technology plays in both enhancing and undermining electoral integrity. On one hand, digital platforms and technological advancements provide tools for increasing transparency, streamlining funding processes, and engaging voters more effectively. On the other hand, these technologies can be exploited to perpetuate money politics through anonymous donations, disseminate misinformation, and manipulate voter behavior.

The pervasive practice of money politics, driven by economic disparities and the pragmatic behavior of voters, continues to pose significant challenges to the quality of democracy in Indonesia. Financial incentives often become a primary tool for candidates to secure votes, thereby undermining the meritocratic principles of democratic elections. The involvement of influential intermediaries, such as *Botoh*, further complicates the electoral landscape. These individuals utilize their

understanding of voter behavior and digital tools to distribute funds and sway public opinion, ultimately skewing election results in favor of financially powerful candidates.

Regulatory bodies like the Central Java Election Supervisory Agency (*Bawaslu*) have identified numerous instances of money politics facilitated by technology, highlighting the urgent need for robust oversight mechanisms. While technology can aid in detecting and investigating electoral malpractices, it also necessitates the continuous adaptation of regulatory frameworks to address new challenges posed by digital advancements. Ensuring transparency and accountability in political funding requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including civil society organizations, educational institutions, and policymakers.

In conclusion, this study underscores the necessity for a balanced approach that leverages the positive aspects of technology while mitigating its potential for misuse. Enhancing digital literacy among voters, implementing stricter regulations on political funding, and promoting ethical standards in elections are crucial steps towards strengthening democratic integrity. By addressing the complexities of money politics and technology, Indonesia can advance towards a more transparent, accountable, and resilient electoral system.

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