



## Mapping law enforcement challenges in money politics during regional head elections in Indonesia: A scoping review

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### ABSTRACT

Money politics continues to undermine the integrity of regional head elections in Indonesia, reflecting persistent weaknesses in election law enforcement. While existing studies discuss vote buying, comprehensive reviews assessing enforcement effectiveness remain limited. This study aims to map scholarly research on money politics in regional elections and identify key enforcement challenges. Using a scoping review based on the Arksey and O'Malley framework, this study analyzes 10 journal articles published between 2020 and 2024 from SINTA, Scopus, and DOAJ, employing thematic content analysis. The findings indicate that money politics persists due to weak institutional coordination, high evidentiary standards, short handling timelines, and pragmatic voter behavior. Law enforcement largely targets field-level actors, resulting in a low deterrent effect. This study contributes by identifying regulatory and institutional gaps and offering policy-relevant insights to strengthen election law enforcement and electoral integrity in Indonesia.

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## 1. Introduction

Elections are a democratic mechanism that allows citizens to choose their representatives or leaders through a periodic, honest, fair, and transparent process. Experts view elections as an expression of popular sovereignty (Assistance, 2019). Democracy itself is a system in which key decisions are made by leaders chosen through competitive, free, and fair elections, with citizens' political rights guaranteed (Tanggo et al., 2024; Triana, 2023). It is not only about majority rule, but also about open competition for power through legitimate elections supported by transparency and accountability (Scroll & For, 2020).

Regional Head Elections are a democratic means to realize local sovereignty and uphold the rule of law. Article 1(1) of Law No. 10 of 2016 requires Pilkada to be conducted directly, generally, freely, secretly, honestly, and fairly, principles that protect election integrity and restrict money politics (Mardiah, 2023; Rahmat et al., 2016). These principles are fundamentally at the heart of a democratic electoral system. Any violation of these electoral principles not only erodes the legitimacy of election outcomes but also contradicts the fundamental values of popular sovereignty and social justice embedded within Indonesia's constitutional democracy and the philosophy of Pancasila (Farida et al., 2024).

Indrayani and Wibowo note that low political literacy and ineffective regulations, including Law No. 7 of 2017, allow money politics to persist (Dahlan et al., 2025). Studies show it damages election quality, erodes public trust, fuels corruption, and suppresses the emergence of leaders with integrity (Abdiellah & Muharram, 2022). Despite efforts from institutions like the KPK and Bawaslu, money politics remains widespread and increasingly subtle (Gabriel et al., 2024). However, the low deterrent effect and weak law enforcement against perpetrators of money politics present challenges (Farida et al., 2024). In addition, patron-client cultural factors, voter education levels, and economic inequality also contribute to strengthening this practice (Aji, 2020).

The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) is an independent body responsible for combating corruption in Indonesia (Syarifudin, 2005). In the context of national and regional elections, KPK plays a key role in safeguarding democratic integrity through prevention, supervision, and prosecution efforts (Halilul, 2020). Based on Law No. 30/2002, amended by Law No. 19/2019, Article 6 mandates the KPK to coordinate, supervise, investigate, and prosecute corruption crimes. Forms of corruption in elections and regional elections are: (1) Money politics: buying votes, distributing basic food supplies, (2) Misuse of campaign funds, (3) Abuse of power by the incumbent, and (4) Bribery to election organizers (KPU, Bawaslu) (Hosnah et al., 2024).

Several studies by Diamantina & Alw, (2022), Munawar, (2025), Amilia et al., (2022), Farida et al., (2024), and Muslim et al., (2023), conclude that law enforcement against money politics remains ineffective. They highlight issues such as sanctions that also target voters, causing reluctance to report; short handling deadlines; difficult evidentiary standards; unclear exceptions; weak regulations; and legal gaps that allow money politics to persist, ultimately encouraging corrupt governance and low political maturity (Hawing & Nurul, 2020). In contrast, research by Noviona et al., (2024) emphasizes the importance of synergy between Bawaslu, local governments, and the community in safeguarding elections, offering a model that other regions can adopt.

This study maps existing research on money politics in Regional Elections, drawing on several relevant journals (Susantii et al., 2021). Unlike systematic reviews, a narrative review involves some subjectivity because it relies on the researcher's interpretation (Hawing & Hartaman, 2021). Because few studies have broadly examined the forms, causes, impacts, and regulatory responses to money politics, this study uses a scoping review to provide an overall picture of the phenomenon and assess the effectiveness of current regulations and law enforcement. The findings are expected to reveal gaps and support future policy recommendations (Snyder, 2019).

Despite the growing body of literature on money politics in Indonesian elections, most existing studies focus on normative legal analysis, case studies, or empirical examinations of specific regions and election cycles. However, there is a lack of research that systematically maps how law enforcement against money politics is discussed across the legal literature, particularly in

terms of effectiveness, recurring obstacles, and institutional limitations. This study addresses this gap by employing a scoping review to synthesize existing research, identify dominant enforcement patterns and regulatory weaknesses, and offer policy-relevant insights for strengthening election law enforcement in Indonesia.

## **2. Method**

This scoping review was compiled using a qualitative approach focused on content analysis of 10 scholarly articles relevant to the theme of money politics in the context of elections and regional elections in Indonesia. This methodology was used to systematically map the scope of issues, actors, and dynamics of law enforcement reflected in the academic literature.

### **2.1. Identify Relevant Studies**

Relevant studies were identified through multiple sources, including electronic databases, reference lists, and original journal searches. This study relied on original searches in Sinta, Scopus, and DOAJ. Legal policy serves as the population element examined, while company value is treated as the affected variable.

### **2.2. Study Selection**

The author reviewed 10 legal articles on money politics in legislative, regional, and village head elections. The literature was selected for its relevance to law enforcement and includes normative, sociological, and empirical perspectives. From each article, the author extracted the study's focus, key findings on money politics, the approach used (such as progressive or socio-juridical), and the recommendations proposed.

### **2.3. Data Mapping**

Data from selected articles were entered into a matrix table that included author name, year, article title, and main findings.

### **2.4. Collection, Summary, and Reporting of Results**

The collected data will be presented in the results and discussion section. This scoping review is intended to give a broad overview of how money politics is understood, regulated, and addressed in legal literature, while also identifying research gaps and offering direction for future studies and policy development in election reform and law enforcement in Indonesia (Warburton & Aspinall, 2019).

## **3. Analysis and Results**

Legal rules on money politics in Indonesian elections must be clear and strictly enforced, as many studies show it remains a major barrier to a healthy democracy (Hamson, 2021; Noviona et al., 2024). Firm and consistent regulations are essential to preventing these practices; without them, elections and elected leaders will continue to face legitimacy issues. Strong political education and active public oversight are also needed to ensure clean and fair elections.

**Table 1.** Preliminary research

No	Author	Title	Research Findings
1	Suparno, Wahyu Jatmiko Aji	Money Politic Dalam Pemilihan Kepala Daerah Berbasis Pendekatan Hukum Progresif	Enforcement of money politics remains largely intransparent and only targets those involved in the field, leaving intellectual actors untouched. Strengthening the legal framework is necessary.
2	Amalia Diamantina, Lita Tyesta ALW	Quo Vadis Penegakan Hukum Politik Uang: Potret Pilkada Serentak 2020 Di Provinsi Jawa Tengah	Law enforcement for the 2020 regional elections has not been optimal due to regulatory obstacles, difficult evidence, limited authority of the Elections Supervisory

No	Author	Title	Research Findings
3	Alven Patrick Tanggo, Deddy R. Ch. Manafe, Rosalind Angel Fanggi	Penegakan Hukum Terhadap Tindak Pidana Politik Uang oleh Calon Anggota Legislatif pada Pemilihan Umum 2024 di Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur (Studi Kasus: Putusan Pengadilan Tinggi Kupang Nomor 26/PID.SUS/2024/PT KPG)	Agency (Bawaslu), and a culture of public acceptance of money politics as normal. Criminal accountability for those involved in money politics remains weak. Law enforcement must be more consistent to create a deterrent effect.
4	Kalia Azzahra Munawar, Hendra	Peranan Sentra Penegakan Hukum Terpadu (Gakkumdu) dalam Penanganan Tindak Pidana Money Politics Pada Pemilihan Kepala Daerah 2024 (Studi pada Badan Pengawas Pemilu Kota Bandung, 2025)	Gakkumdu's role has been suboptimal due to unclear regulations and numerous legal loopholes. Money politics is rampant, especially during periods of calm, and undermines the quality of democracy.
5	Aip Syarifudin	Pilkada Dan Fenomena Politik Uang: Analisa Penyebab Dan Tantangan Penanganannya (2020)	Money politics occurs due to the low political maturity of voters and candidates. The solution lies in improving regulations and political education.
6	Harrinda Noviona, Aprilita Maharani Putri, Isna Fitria Agustina	Peran Bawaslu Dalam Mencegah Praktik Money politic Pada Pemilu di Kota Surabaya (2024)	Preventing money politics requires synergy between Bawaslu, local government, and the community, with participatory oversight as the key.
7	Abdurrohman	Dampak Fenomena Politik Uang dalam Pemilu dan Pemilihan (2021)	Money politics has an impact on criminal sanctions, the birth of corrupt governments, and the destruction of morals and democratic values in society.
8	Hasan	Praktik Politik Uang Pada Pemilihan Kepala Desa (2022)	Money politics in village head election occurs due to the low level of political understanding and legal awareness among the public, so that the practice continues to recur.
9	Yagus Triana, Erika Khairina, Mochammad Iqbal Fadhlurrohman	Kajian Prinsip Demokrasi Dalam Pemilihan Umum di Indonesia	Elections still face many violations, including money politics, but the quality of Indonesian democracy tends to improve.
10	Parlaungan Gabriel Siahaan A, Novridah Reanti Purba	Pengaruh Tindakan Money Politic Terhadap Kualitas Calon Legislatif Dalam Membangun Demokrasi Yang Sehat Pada Pemilu Tahun 2024	Combating money politics requires consistent enforcement of regulations, education, political party coordination, effective oversight, and transparency.

### 3.1. Analysis of the Impact of Money Politics on Regional Elections

According to the provisions of Article 1 paragraph (1) of Law Number 10 of 2016 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents and Mayors, regional head elections are carried out based on the principles of direct, general, free, secret, honest and fair elections (Snyder, 2019). These principles are fundamentally at the heart of a democratic electoral system. Violations of any of these principles, such as through the practice of vote buying, not only undermine the legitimacy of election results but also violate the principles of popular sovereignty and social justice upheld in the Pancasila state (Collins et al., 2021). Money politics often poses a real threat to the principles of freedom and fairness. Forms such as the giving of money, goods, or promises of political favors before or during the election process constitute serious violations of democratic

electoral principles. Therefore, the principles of regional head elections are not only procedural norms but must also serve as ethical and legal guidelines for addressing any irregularities, in order to maintain election integrity and the quality of local democracy. Several factors that encourage the practice of money politics in the election of the Regent and Deputy Regent are (Aji, 2020; Halilul & Democracy, 2020): a) Economic and social inequality makes voters, especially low-income groups, more vulnerable to vote buying, threatening the principles of fair and equal elections; b) Weak election monitoring systems allow vote buying to occur, as some organizers or security personnel may lack the strength or independence to prevent it; c) Patronage culture in certain regions encourages transactional politics, where voters are treated as individuals who must be “paid” to support a candidate; d) High political costs in regional elections push candidates to seek illegal methods, including money politics, to finance campaign expenses.

Money politics can have various negative impacts on the democratic system, both in the short and long term, including: a) Lowering election quality: Money politics makes election results reflect financial power rather than voters’ rational choices. Voters influenced by cash or goods do not vote based on candidates’ vision, reducing the quality of democracy; b) Creating inequality: Candidates with more money can manipulate outcomes, sidelining those with fewer resources and creating unequal political competition; c) Encouraging corruption: Officials elected through money politics often feel indebted to financiers, increasing the risk of corruption as they try to recover campaign costs; d) Undermining public trust: Widespread money politics weakens confidence in elections and political institutions, leading to apathy and eroding democratic legitimacy (Mietzner, 2019).

### **3.2. The Role of Law Enforcement Against Money Politics in Regional Elections**

Law enforcement ensures legal norms function effectively in society. In regional elections, enforcing rules against money politics is essential for fairness and credibility, involving both prevention and sanctions. It maintains legal certainty, corrects violations, and upholds public trust in the justice system (Marzuki, 2019). Law enforcement requires concrete actions to ensure justice, certainty, and legal benefits. Combating money politics depends not only on law enforcers but also on public involvement in safeguarding elections. Its effectiveness is strongly tied to the integrity and professionalism of legal officials. In countries like Indonesia, weak institutions and limited capacity often hinder consistent legal processes (Indikator et al., 2025). Effective enforcement relies on four pillars: competent officers, proper facilities, public legal awareness, and supportive bureaucracy. If any pillar is weak, money politics becomes harder to curb. Public involvement is also crucial, as citizens must help monitor elections and resist vote buying. Law enforcement is a shared responsibility, not just the authorities’ task.

## **4. Conclusion**

This scoping review demonstrates that money politics in Indonesia’s regional head elections remains a systemic problem, primarily due to persistent weaknesses in law enforcement mechanisms. By synthesizing findings from 10 scholarly articles, this study shows that ineffective inter-institutional coordination, high evidentiary burdens, short procedural timelines, and a pragmatic voter culture are the most frequently cited obstacles to effective enforcement. These findings directly address the purpose of this scoping review, which is to map enforcement-related challenges and assess their implications for electoral integrity.

The main scientific contribution of this study lies in its systematic mapping of fragmented legal scholarship on money politics, offering an integrated perspective on recurring enforcement gaps that are often examined only in isolation. Unlike previous studies focusing on specific

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cases or regions, this review provides a broader analytical framework for understanding why law enforcement efforts have failed to generate a strong deterrent effect.

Future research should move beyond descriptive and normative analyses by incorporating comparative studies across regions, empirical assessments of enforcement outcomes, and evaluations of institutional reform models. Such studies are essential to support evidence-based election law reform and strengthen democratic governance in Indonesia.

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