

## Sociological Implications of Social Exchange in Regional Head Elections in Gorontalo Province

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### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received 2 March 2022

Received in revised form 24

March 202

Accepted 29 March 2022

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#### Keywords:

Implication

Sociological

Exchange

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### Abstract

*This study aims to dissect the Sociological Implications of Social Exchange Post-Election of Regional Head Candidates in Gorontalo Province. Methods of data collection using interviews, documentation and retrospective. This study produced several findings, including: First; Political elite social exchange relations are strategic situations that are mutually dependent, need each other, and are mutually beneficial as well as an effort to consolidate power to achieve electability/victory in the momentum of regional head elections. Second; The pattern of social exchange is based on a number of ownership potentials in the form of elite, figure and financial resources, which can determine the social forces that are considered by political parties to give party approval/recommendations to pairs of candidates for regional heads. Third, the social exchange strategy between party elites and political elites uses each other to achieve victory in the contestation of regional head elections. This study concludes that the sociological implications of social interactions take place in people's lives before and after the election of regional head candidates. There are divisions in society due to friction generated in the election of regional heads originating from social exchange relations, patterns of social exchange and social exchange strategies both individually and in groups of political elites and party elites.*

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### Introduction

The phenomenon of social exchange of political elites in the regional head election, the author begins by submitting the results of research by LSI and SMRC (2011); Political Indicator (2013) which found that the high political costs were caused by both pairs of candidates for regional heads and candidates for legislative members and constituents only to build short-term (pragmatic) political relations with political parties (Gatra, 2013).

The relevance of the research findings of several survey institutions above indicates that the level of political mecca in Indonesia has not yet moved from the issue of the struggle for power. The political system that is supposed to articulate the interests of the people is only a means of achieving the goals of interest groups. Therefore, the social exchange of political elites is still a scourge as well as an ulcer in politics in the country. Transactional politics and all the financial aspects that accompany it are then packaged in more polite terms as a political budget (political cost) which is also popular as a political budget cycle (Blais, Andre & Nadeau, 1992; Breder, Adi & Drazen, 2004; Gonzalez, 2002). ; Rogoff, 1987; Shi et al., 2006) where all budgets related to political financing are considered rational in the democratic process.

In addition to the research in the global context above, the theme of transactional politics has received a lot of attention from national and local researchers. For example, Hidayat dissects the elite power relations at the local level between businessmen, rulers, and post-election local government administration. practice of power oligarchy. According to him, the construction

base of the power oligarchy varies based on the strength of political parties, kinship ties, ethnic ties, and family relationships. The practice of power oligarchy is relatively effective in the administration of regional government because it is supported by the existence of shadow politics and business managers who act as liaison actors between regional officials and the community in general and to entrepreneurs in particular (Hidayat, 2007).

Muhtadi (2013) on money politics and electoral dynamics describes the rise of money politics due to two main things, namely: First, the lack of closeness of voters to political parties. Second, the poor performance of political parties in the eyes of the public because many party cadres are involved in corruption cases (Muhtadi, 2013). On the other hand, Razaqtiar (2016) examines the role of political parties in regional head elections. In the case of the 2013 Karanganyar Regional Head Election, it was concluded that the victory of the regional head candidate pair was not only determined by the popularity of the regional head candidate pair, political parties had an important role not only as a political vehicle but also as a means of bringing together a number of strategic ideas to increase the electability rating of regional head candidates (Razaqtiar, 2016).

Likewise, the results of quantitative research conducted by Indora (2014) which found that there was a significant influence between the influence of transactional politics on voter behavior in regional head elections (Indora et al., 2014). Likewise, the findings of Rachim's (2017) doctoral dissertation with the theme of transactional politics in Makassar City explained that the proximity of political actors to a number of regional officials had a significant impact on the electability of legislative candidates (Rachim, 2017).

The findings of these previous studies are, in principle, sufficient to explain that the current democratic process still opens the widest possible space for the practice of social exchange of political elites. This phenomenon at the same time nourishes the practice of patronage and clientelism in democracy. Patronage is defined as a form of material distribution or political benefits made by politicians to their constituents, while clientelism is the character of the relationship between politicians and their constituents (Aspinall et al., 2015).

Substantively, previous research with the theme of social exchange of political elites can be grouped into two study patterns, namely: First, researchers describe the important role of transactional politics to support the power of regional head candidates, legislative candidates and voters and political parties are a condition that is interdependent and mutually beneficial. Second, transactional politics is a scourge and an ulcer that undermines the democratic system because it only perpetuates the pragmatic relationship of every element related to the implementation of the political process (regional head/legislative candidates, constituents, and political parties). As a result, the articulation of the interests of the people is defeated by the interests of the elite and limited interest groups. This also shows that the ontological reality of previous studies is still based on the classical paradigm of political sociology, only limited to the problem of patron-client relations.

In contrast to this research, which aims to explore the post-structural and post-material space, it focuses on the elements behind the reality of the social exchange of political elites in the contestation of regional head elections. The elements behind reality as an object of ontology (area of knowledge) are not only to identify the social exchange of political elites thematically but also how social exchange works, is constructed, or is operationalized behind the apparent reality. The social exchange of political elites, voters, and political parties as a manifestation of achieving pragmatic goals that injure the general election system is not a natural phenomenon but a complex representation of multi-political interests.

The ontological novelty (state of the art) of this research is strengthened by the sociological fact that the process of holding regional head elections, including in Gorontalo Province in 2017 is still colored by the existence of social exchanges of political elites. The phenomenon of transactional politics in Gorontalo Province, Gorontalo Regency, and Bone Bolango Regency as a research locus is even more interesting to study. For example, the 2017 gubernatorial election which was won by Rusli Habibie and Idris Rahim as cadres of the National Mandate Party actually won through the Golkar Party, because the National Mandate Party gave recommendations to non-cadre candidate pairs. In Gorontalo Regency, the regional head election was won by a pair of candidates from among political party cadres. Meanwhile, in Bone Bolango Regency, which is the basis of the Indonesian Unity Party, it gave recommendations to non-cadres but suffered defeat.

Transactional politics has a very broad scope, it can touch all political activities. Both the election of the President, Governor, Mayor/Regent even at the village head level requires political transactions. The costs incurred during the presidential and regional elections are a burden that must be returned when someone has gained power.

Competition between political parties makes each candidate for power try his best to spread influence on the public to get the support of the Party. This action actually fosters money politics among party elites and can affect the democratization of regional head elections.

In the perspective of political sociology, it is certain that there will be socio-political exchanges between the political elite and the electorate. Political reality does necessitate an attitude of interdependence and mutual benefit (symbiotic mutualism) between patron-clients. Money, which was originally a tool for economic transactions, has been transformed into an effective tool for obtaining non-economic benefits from the seat of power. It is clear that it is difficult for regional head candidates to get support if they are not accompanied by money. Money is used not only to gain support from constituents but also to bind constituent support. Thus, the social exchange of political elites actually reflects cultural expression, the result of social construction of society that forms an important link between political events and individual behaviors in reacting to these events (Gaffar, 1989). Basically politics is a compromise or sharing of power. This is not only in Indonesia, but also throughout the world that adheres to a democratic system. Politics is a power-sharing process, where a person or group of people who gain power will share power with others.

Usually, the division of power is related to the political coalition that was previously built. It is this coalition that allows for the social exchange of political elites. Before a coalition is built, the exchange of political elites must be agreed upon. If in practice there is betrayal, then the political agreement can be evaluated or not carried out at all. What is interesting from the researcher is the social exchange in the political elite among party elites who do not consider political ethics in determining regional head candidates. In Gorontalo, the chairman of political party A sells his party to a candidate for regional head who does not have a party, and the party owner nominates himself with another party that meets the requirements for regional head candidacy.

The concept of the problem above is further relevant in the research question what are the sociological implications of social exchange after the regional head election in Gorontalo Province. The purpose of this research is to find out the process, meaning, and implications of social exchange relations and patterns of political elites, political parties and the voting community and how the social exchange strategy is maximized. Therefore, the objectives to be achieved in this study are to understand the relation of socio-political exchange between the

political elite in the election of the head of the country, and to explain the sociological implications of social exchange on social interaction after the election of regional heads.

## Methods

### Paradigm and Type of Research

The research is not only to identify and understand the reality of the social exchange of political elites but also to find the meaning behind the reality, considering that the trend of relationships that are built in social exchange is generally pragmatic. The research paradigm that is considered relevant for this research is the constructivist paradigm. The constructivist paradigm is mainly based on the ontological assumption that the reality of political elite relations is formed as a result of social construction which is bridged by a certain value system, which can be relative or tentative in accordance with the interests to be achieved. The ontological explanation of the social exchange of political elites can be examined in terms of the degree of structuration relationship that influences each other in the form of competition and cooperation.

The constructivist paradigm's epistemology is bridged by hermeneutic and dialectical subjective transactional values between researchers and the phenomenon of social exchange of political elites. That is, the methodology used prioritizes comprehensive and contextual analysis to find the truth by revealing the real truth behind the reality that occurred. Because this research methodology uses a comprehensive and contextual analysis, the approach used is a qualitative approach (Ratna, 2010).

Thus, its axiological consequences for the contribution of discourse and knowledge about these issues are used as channels in determining and voicing choices by all stakeholders in the momentum of the regional head elections in Gorontalo Province in particular, and in Indonesia in general.

### Research Focus and Locus

Observing the problems raised in the previous chapter, there are at least four main issues that need to be analyzed, namely the process of elite social exchange; the influence of elites on political party administrators in determining regional head candidates, and the sociological impact of elite social exchange on voters (voters).

In order to avoid bias in interpretation of the subject matter, it is further necessary to state the operational limitations as follows; The sociological implication is how the socio-political interaction takes place in people's lives after the election of regional head candidates. Is society fragmented, causing friction and how to reduce its potential.

**Research Locus.** The research was carried out in the scope of Gorontalo Province by selecting 3 main loci, namely Gorontalo Province, Gorontalo Regency, and Bone Bolango Regency.

These three loci were deliberately chosen by considering several facts which include; In Gorontalo Province, there is a practice of social exchange between political parties in determining candidates for regional heads related to socio-political aspects and taking into account aspects of regional and environmental risks. Gorontalo Province has 1 (one) City and 5 (five) regencies which since the 2005 regional head election to 2017 have strong indications of the practice of social exchange within the political elite. In the process of succession of regional heads, political parties take advantage of candidate pairs to strengthen their political influence to gain support from the public (voters). Pairs of candidates for regional heads, voters, and political parties do not have a close relationship both ideologically and sociologically. The political paradigm between regional head candidates, voters, and political parties is oriented to

the use of pragmatic strategic situations to achieve temporary goals. Data collection techniques include structured in-depth interviews, documentation, retrospectives.

## **Results and Discussion**

Sociological implications of social exchange on social interaction after the election of regional head candidates

### **Social Polarization Due to Social Exchange**

Political polarization in society, which will split into two opposing poles over an issue, policy, or ideology, has shaped the face of Indonesian politics recently. This tendency is the effect of party elites in carrying out social exchange. Many studies have proven that mutual trust between citizens is the micro foundation that will encourage community members to participate in the political process. Through various voluntary channels, political participation will ultimately foster democracy. Therefore, it is feared that the erosion of mutual trust among citizens will affect people's reluctance to participate in the political process.

The polarization impact of social exchange will affect the low level of political participation, such as the low use of voting rights and citizen involvement in campaigns and public policy making, which affects the low quality of democracy.

In many cases, polarization is generally an extension of the differences in political lines that grow among the elite in the legislature, which then affects the political behavior of citizens. For example, the different positions of the party elite will split and adopt other elite positions that are supported by the party as a result of social exchanges.

However, in recent Indonesian politics, polarization is more of a popular phenomenon that develops at the mass level, rather than the political elite. The non-ideological tendency of Indonesian party politics allows the political elite to maneuver in all directions. Generally they cluster at the poles of the ruling coalition. There are many motives, of course, but it's easy to find the economic and political advantage behind them.

This coalition change was not immediately followed by its supporters. Voters' commitment to the candidates they support appears stronger than elite pragmatism. In addition, another important fact emerges: many people are becoming more politically aware, curious about the candidates and the policies they offer, and participating in campaigning for the candidates they support. In short, polarization has activated those who were not previously involved in politics to be more active in politics.

Another impact of the strengthening of mass polarization in social exchange is that candidates are encouraged to differentiate the policies they offer voters. For candidates, it is important to retain their loyal supporters. For voters, such polarization will help them choose the right candidate.

The polarization of the voting community in addition to the existence of socio-political exchanges, is also polarized with the emergence of new parties that have their respective mass bases. And the community, consciously or not, has been hegemonized by party elites who are temporary or temporary which only applies during the regional head election.

Observing the patterns of political parties, it can be concluded that there is no ideological distance between political parties. Some political observers argue that this phenomenon is pragmatic politics, namely the politics of shortcuts and practical ways to rule by putting aside party ideology.

However, according to the author, it is more appropriate to call it opportunist politics, namely

the mere desire to gain power by making the best use of every opportunity without ideology at all. Pragmatic politics puts aside an ideology that essentially exists, but opportunists have absolutely no ideology.

Thus political polarization occurs, with hard-line Islamic understanding at one pole and Pancasila ideology at the opposite pole. This symptom can be interpreted that some people are starting to question the constitution, some are doubting the basic ideology of the state Pancasila.

Many parties argue that the impact of social exchanges carried out by political parties and party elites can polarize society as the general election approaches and is more pronounced in regional head elections. And if this polarization is not good and does not maintain the integrity of the nation and state in the Unity of the Republic of Indonesia, this will have an impact and lead to an ideology that invites the division of the people which will lead to the dissolution of the state.

The phenomenon that occurs in society with the existence of social exchange theory is not as good as imagined by political elite figures in the party to determine the candidate pair who will become the owner of power.

Indeed, at first glance, social exchanges are indeed beneficial for political elites and parties, because it may be, although not transparently, that social and political exchanges mean that political transactions occur, both materially and non-materially. The beneficiaries of this socio-political exchange are the political elites and parties to take advantage of the moment of the regional head election. While the impact on the grassroots society was polarization between party supporters and political elites which led to the weakening of social ties in community groups who were initially united and together and even did not get anything from political elite and party leaders, slowly this socio-political exchange took place. make society divided pragmatically consciously or unconsciously.

On the other hand, the weakening of social ties in social exchange does not only occur in the community, even among political elites and party leaders, they will touch each other if there are no agreements that lead to "political transactions."

In addition to the weakening of social ties, this social exchange has an impact on future risks in building communication between party elites and their supporters if the candidate they support can win the post-conflict local election. Therefore, political elites must be able to control their supporters and political opponents to build togetherness with the party that wins the election.

Basically, humans are social beings who will always need other people to interact or live their lives as good citizens and participate in democratic parties in determining their agency rights as participants must vote. Humans do not live as individual beings, but humans are part of a society that has social ties within its own community which are found in various ethnic groups, customs, languages, and different ways of interacting.

The Birth of Exchange Theory George Homans views social behavior as an exchange of activities and interests held by each individual. Homans' exchange theory is the interaction between individuals who exchange interests with the basic law of "rewards and benefits obtained by individuals who make the exchange". Social exchanges that occur in society are not always static, because individuals do not always benefit from the process of social exchange, therefore propositions need to be made.

According to Homans, there is a basic assumption of mutual benefit so that this behavior becomes a social exchange behavior. In the example above, it is a social exchange behavior

because they exchange smiles with each other. In Homans' concept, this exchange behavior is strongly influenced by several propositions that can determine whether the behavior is repeated or avoided.

### **Changes in The Pre- and Post-Election Political Constellation**

In addition to the fading of ideology in the post-conflict local election political constellation, political parties are also trapped in a political situation that tends to be pragmatic and transactional, which makes ideology and political platforms no longer the main foothold in contesting and negotiating. All parties in the election ultimately tend to be "middle" or more moderate, and fight for the same niche with other parties.

This phenomenon has finally encouraged political parties to compete for votes by offering short-term rational considerations in election campaigns. In the political moment between the two elections, the pragmatism of political parties can be observed from the pattern of coalitions and changes in coalitions. The trend of post-election political parties and post-conflict local elections will be the emergence of new species of political parties that will be played by political elites and political parties. Because the contribution of political pragmatism to the new party species will be predicted to be the future of political parties after the old parties are tested in public after the election.

Political dynamics in the last few decades have basically opened up opportunities for the expansion of the party model. Second, in the existing typology, Gunther and Diamond assess that although there are various criteria, there are still shortcomings in creating a typology that is consistent and compatible between one type or model with another. Some typologies are based on functional criteria, classifying parties based on the purpose of their presence with certain goals being pursued. Several other typologies are based on the size of the party structure with complex infrastructure and networks and relations with social organizations.

Therefore, the author sees the tendency of political parties' political attitudes both in the election and after the election to become the basis for building an analysis of the development of new party species variations. In general, there are three important aspects that need to be observed from the post-conflict local election situation, namely, first, the organizational model of the party which is not clearly defined. In its development, there is no single political party that has a tendency to only one pole type of political party such as the classification of Gunther and Diamond. Political parties in Indonesia seem to combine the three elements of the electoral party classification. Meanwhile, several political parties in Indonesia tend to develop between two poles (catch-all personalistic and catch-all programmatic). Second, policy formulation is made reactively and does not reflect a deep understanding and has a firm foundation of constituency claims.

### **The Unexpected Excesses of that Social Exchange**

Every human being has the potential to become a political person, so be a healthy politician. And we really cannot avoid this politics because this is every year before the political year, the year of the general election for presidential and legislative candidates, as well as the election of the Regional Representatives Council (DPD), even to the election of regional heads.

There are those who choose to stay on the neutral path, there are those who are consistent for abstention and there are those who show their support frontally. Ethically, of course, everything is healthy, but there are also those who are affected by the excesses of supporting fellow political elites and parties through social and political exchanges. The excess of politics in socio-political exchange is division among supporters. The election contestation, for

example, should be greeted with joy, not hostility. Although, indeed every contestant and contestant's supporters always want the champion to win. There is no problem, as long as it does not cause bloodshed among the nation's children. So the solution is to fight with argument, not with sentiment. Therefore, politics becomes the highest science in civilization, because every politician must be able to get rid of that difficulty, every politician must be able to distribute justice in power. The political excesses of social exchange among party elites always lead to a diversity of differences both within the party elite and among its supporters.

Whereas the General Election of Regional Heads which was held either through socio-political exchanges or independently encountered several problems such as money politics, the elected regional heads were heavily involved in corruption cases, as well as the tendency of the community to be materialistic, the emergence of horizontal and vertical conflicts in the life of the state, the post-conflict local election prioritizes public figures so that Not necessarily the elected regional head is a regional head who has good organizational management skills, and conflicts in the bureaucracy cause services to become unegalitarian, not to mention if there are conflicts, riots, infrastructure damage during the campaign period and afterward.

That there are positive and negative impacts from the regional head elections but in its implementation there are too many negative impacts obtained from the positive impacts obtained from the direct regional head election system, the positive impact is that the people's voice is more respected and people's sovereignty is more recognized but if it is still there is money politics "Political Transactions" caused by the social exchange of political elites and party elites, then this behavior will have negative excesses.

This includes wasting too much time, money and energy, not achieving the goals and objectives of the general election itself and only benefiting a few political elites and party elites. There is money politics so that people change their mindset to become materialistic. The occurrence of conflict in the midst of society both vertically and horizontally. Problems in implementation are related to technical and stages of regional head elections that raise various problems. The high number of corruption cases caused by the implications of money politics in the general election for regional heads directly causes basic services and public services to become inegalitarian. High abstentions and invalid votes. The tendency of people to choose based on public figures and pay less attention to leadership abilities.

In learning democracy in a country, it is true that sometimes you have to spend a lot of money, energy, and time, but it must really be studied in depth whether the method or system used today is really effective and efficient to become a regional head election system in Indonesia. Therefore, the author tries to provide an overview of the efficiency and effectiveness of direct regional head elections with the current system.

When viewed from the phenomenon of the election of regional heads, the community prefers leadership on the figure factor. So that it can be rearranged to strengthen the legitimate and simplify the requirements if there are figures or community leaders who are supported by the community through independent. Direct regional head elections in Indonesia should be improved from a mature democratic aspect if it is to be implemented efficiently and effectively, there must be a high level of political awareness from the political elite players and the public.

The Regional Head Election (Pemilukada) is a democratic arena for the community to take part in determining their voting rights to elect a regional head leader. However, the tendency for conflict to occur in the community is part of the political dynamics, the community will provide support to the candidate pairs which can lead to conflict, excesses in the post-conflict local election. However, all of this will be able to minimize conflicts between communities

influenced by political elites as a result of socio-political exchanges, as well as campaign strategies that are not in accordance with the rules, money politics, group sentiment, intimidation and supervision carried out by organizers or parties who take advantage of this moment of regional head election for temporary interest.

Based on the results of the research described above, the Sociological Implications of the election of regional heads in the province of Gorontalo are very unique and interesting to observe.

Sociologically, the community has understood that approaching the post-conflict local election will naturally have implications for polarization in society with different political conditions. Moreover, if there is a socio-political exchange, the community, especially party sympathizers, will adjust to the current situation. This only lasted for a moment in the implementation of the post-conflict local election. After that, the community will re-unite after the post-conflict local election is over, although excesses from the post-conflict local election can still occur.

It has become part of the post-conflict local election, be it party elites or the community, by itself, will be polarized with the situation leading up to the democratic party until the completion of the political celebration. Moreover, if there is a social exchange of party elites, there will be different community groups in determining their political direction. After the completion of the democratic party, it is hoped that there will be no more polarization, both within the party and in the lower society.

Every time before the general election, as well as the election for governors, regents and mayors, the public will be massively polarized by the party elite playing both internally and externally. Even in the election for the Regional Representatives Council (DPD), the voters were already polarized with their own choices. As the leader of the party or candidate for the DPD, keep this community well so as not to spread hate issues to one of the candidates.

Political researchers (Sartori, 1976) argue that the implications of socio-political exchange will be political polarization, because of the ideological distance between political parties. Observing the patterns of attitude of Indonesian political parties after the New Order, we can determine whether there is an ideological distance between parties so that we can conclude whether there is a political polarization.

Observing the patterns of political parties, it can be concluded that there is no ideological distance between political parties. Some political observers argue that this phenomenon is pragmatic politics, namely the politics of shortcuts and practical ways to rule by putting aside party ideology. Sociological implications are not only shaped by ideology alone, but there are things that happen to people's lives, in addition to party ideology, also to candidates who will be paired as candidates for Governor, Regent and Mayor.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the descriptions on the discussion of the problems that have been carried out, it can be concluded as follows. The process of succession of regional heads, political elites and political parties takes advantage of each other's candidate pairs to strengthen their political influence to gain support from the public (voters). Because in fact the pair of candidates for regional heads, voters, and political parties have close relations both ideologically and sociologically. Sociological implications occur in socio-political interactions during the period of regional head elections and post-election of regional head candidates. Society will be fragmented, and cause friction according to its potential. If the political elite and the party elite conduct social exchanges in the regional head election, they must consider the candidates or

figures that will be carried in the regional head election, be it Governor, Regent, and Mayor. Because the culture in Gorontalo Province is still more dominant in choosing figures or figures who are worthy of leading the community. Apart from the figures, the political elites pay attention to their human resources. Because there are many figures who have more financial resources, but cannot win the regional head election because of low human resources. In order to reduce the implications of political friction due to socio-political exchanges and the polarization of society at the lower levels, it is hoped that party elites, political elites, election administrators (KPU), election supervisory bodies (Bawaslu) as well as the government and society together maintain community security stability.

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