

The Impact of Transactional Politics on Papuan Ethnic Identity Politics in the Dynamics of the 2024 General Election in Manokwari Regency

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Abstract :

The objective of this study is to investigate the perspectives of the Papuan ethnic group regarding the dynamics of identity politics in general elections, which frequently encompass aspirations related to identity politics. The term "Papuan ethnicity" refers to an identity within Papuan nationalism, symbolizing the mobilization and unification of Papuans. In the context of elections, the notion of Papuan ethnicity becomes a significant issue for electoral candidates, particularly for those who lack support from their fellow Papuans. Utilizing qualitative research methods and ethnographic approaches, this study explores the impact of transactional politics on the ethnic perspectives and political participation of Papuans during elections. It examines various factors, including the influence of political funding on voter preferences, the mobilization of ethnic groups for political backing, and the dynamics of inter-ethnic interactions within political disputes. The findings of this research aim to provide an in-depth understanding of the patterns of political aspirations in Papua and their implications for the consolidation of democracy in Indonesia.

Keywords: *identity politics, political aspirations, Papuan ethnicity, general elections*

Abstrak :

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki perspektif kelompok etnis Papua mengenai dinamika politik identitas dalam pemilihan umum, yang sering mencakup aspirasi terkait politik identitas. Istilah "etnis Papua" mengacu pada identitas dalam nasionalisme Papua, melambangkan mobilisasi dan penyatuan orang Papua. Dalam konteks pemilu, gagasan etnis Papua menjadi isu signifikan bagi calon pemilih, terutama bagi mereka yang kurang dukungan dari sesama orang Papua. Dengan memanfaatkan metode penelitian kualitatif dan pendekatan etnografi, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi dampak politik transaksional terhadap perspektif etnis dan partisipasi politik orang Papua selama pemilu. Ini mengkaji berbagai faktor, termasuk pengaruh pendanaan politik terhadap preferensi pemilih, mobilisasi kelompok etnis untuk dukungan politik, dan dinamika interaksi antar-etnis dalam perselisihan politik. Temuan penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan pemahaman mendalam tentang pola aspirasi politik di Papua dan implikasinya terhadap konsolidasi demokrasi di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: *politik identitas, aspirasi politik, etnisitas Papua, pemilihan umum*

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Introduction

Identity politics and political aspirations are two things that are interrelated and influence a voter's psychology when making their choice. This is a phenomenon that occurs in the dynamics of general elections in Indonesia. Political identity is often used by someone belonging to a political party to promote the underlying ideology, goals, and ideals to the public (Jung & Mittal, 2020). This political identity plays an important role in shaping social judgments and cues (Basyouni et al., 2022), so they can influence voters' attitudes in making their decisions. Identity politics focuses primarily on ethnicity to advance the interests of specific ethnic groups (Sinha, 2022), while politics identity involves politicians crafting their identities and connecting with supporters through the strategic use of language to express their positions on various issues and their relationships with them express to peers (Pollock & Wheeler, 2022).

Identity politics refers to other political, economic, and social entities that attempt to form a collective identity based on ethnicity, race, language, and origin (Hill & Wilson, 2003) According to (Sinha, 2022), when identity politics is viewed from the perspective of ethnicity, it is related to the use of ethnic identity as a basis for ethnic political strategies, struggles, and movements. In Indonesia, the strategy of ethnic identity politics is reflected in electoral dynamics by communicating the identity of electoral participants every five years to win general elections (Fuad, 2014). Saya sudah menempatkan citation di akhir kalimat

The role of identity politics, interpreted through the lens of Papuan ethnicity in government politics by (Snanfi et al., 2018), is used as clear evidence that ethnic identity is reproduced by certain groups to achieve their political goals in government the area in which the Papuans practice their identity politics. However, in Papua, for certain communities, elections are not only an individual political process, but also a socio-cultural phenomenon (Kusdarini et al., 2022). For example, parliamentary elections in Papua are conducted in several locations using a *noken* system reinforced with ethnic identity. System *noken* elections is a traditional voting model used in

elections in remote, mountainous parts of Papua in easternmost Indonesia (Faiz et al., 2023). This existing system will be problematic in the face of political identity conflicts rooted in the Papuan ethnic group, given the electoral dynamics that are often shaped by monetary policy in the run-up to general elections.

The dynamics of monetary politics in elections refers to the use of money or materials to influence voters, whereby people vote when they receive money from election participants (Junaedi et al., 2023). Politicians or their associates offer rewards in the form of money, material goods or other support to voters during the campaign and especially before election day (Baniya et al., 2024) this is done in direct exchange for support that voters provide in particular politician. This monetary policy has triggered a paradigm shift from identity politics to transactional politics (Asmuni et al., 2022). This phenomenon is characterized by a shift in voter orientation from preferences based purely on ethnic identity to criteria dominated by financial incentives.

The aim of this study is to analyze and describe the dynamics of voter paradigm shifts in Manokwari, with a focus on identity politics, particularly Papuan ethnicity and transactional politics. These two factors, namely Papuan ethnicity and transactional politics, influence each other and contribute to changes in the views and decisions of voters in Manokwari. This study addresses three main questions, namely; What is the perspective of Papuan ethnicity? How does the buying and selling of voters work in the general election? And what are the dynamics of the assembly election in Manokwari Regency?

Analysis Framework

Monetary policy is a term that describes political transactions that take place between people receiving small amounts of money and elite communities receiving large amounts of money, or even projects in elections (Fardian, 2021). Monetary politics is a new phenomenon that emerged in the 2014 general elections, recorded 311 cases of monetary politics in the 2015 regional elections (Fardian, 2021), and became phenomenal in the 2024 elections. In addition to monetary politics, the phenomenon of identity politics also plays a role in the dynamics

of elections, which became a “boom” in 2017 with the election of the governor of the Special Capital Region (DKI) Jakarta (Pilkada DKI Jakarta) (Suherman et al., 2020). Both phenomena have significant implications for electoral dynamics in Indonesia.

In the context of sociology, both money policy and identity politics describe the use of symbols for interaction between politicians and voters. The interaction between politicians and their voters uses special symbols that give meaning to each entity to build communication patterns according to their respective interests (Ferdy Firmansyah & Kurniawan, 2021). This interaction pattern can be explained as interpretive and interpretive social interaction or by other names as symbolic interactionism (Aksan et al., 2009). According to (Blumer, 1986), symbolic interaction is based on three basic statements: (a) people develop their attitude towards things according to the meaning suggested to them. (b) these meanings are derived from "the interaction of one of them with the recipient". (c) these meanings change in the interpretation process.

A study conducted by (Sønderholm & Mainz, 2023) argues that the widespread practice in the United States of taking voters to polling stations on election day is an example of people being paid to vote. We defend the definition of what it means to pay people to vote, and based on that definition, transporting voters to the polls is an example of paying people to vote. Applying Blumer's view to the context of elections, the practice of buying and selling votes can be interpreted as a symbolic interaction between party politicians and vote holders. This shows that the exchange of money via voice is not exclusively transactional behavior, but that money is interpreted based on motives, beliefs, and behavioral orientations towards money (Sesini & Lozza, 2023). This transactional behavior is a manifestation of "resource mobilization" as a form of political commitment to a specific goal based on a shared identity that includes rational and economic perspectives (González-Cacheda & Outeda, 2021).

Methods

This research is a qualitative study of perception of Papuan ethnicity that intersects with the importance of winning in the 2024 election. This research was conducted to examine the meanings associated with ethnic identity in a political context to understand how these perceptions impact electoral dynamics. Data collection occurs through direct observation of the transaction processes involved in buying and selling votes. In addition, an information search is carried out through interviews to obtain additional information.

Table 1. Profile of Research Informant

Anonymized initials	Age (years)	Gender	Work	Position
DS	69	F	Party Politician	Legislative General Election Participants
SN	36	M	Party Politician	Legislative General Election Participants
DP	59	M	Party Politician	Legislative General Election Participants
AK	37	F	Self-employed	Broker
RA	32	M	Self-employed	Broker
JM	39	M	Self-employed	Broker
YS	42	F	Self-employed	Voting Rights Owner
YY	30	F	Self-employed	Voting Rights Owner
PR	66	M	Self-employed	Polling Station Officer
HB	54	M	Self-employed	Polling Station Officer
KM	72	M	Self-employed	Papua Customary Council
DS	49	F	State Civil Apparatus	Government

Data obtained through observation and interviews were collected and simultaneously analyzed in a grouped manner to differentiate, sort, and code using NVIVO (Elliott-Mainwaring, 2021). NVivo is an easy-to-use tool to facilitate coding for thematic narrative synthesis. The results of the review have been examined in previous articles for data analysis purposes (Elliott-Mainwaring, 2021) (Priyatni et al., 2020). The coded data is presented in visual and tabular form that explains the dynamics of the transactional politics and identity politics of the Papuan ethnicity. Explanation of

transactional political dynamics and identity politics of Papuan ethnicity using resource mobilization theory (Buechler, 1993) This theory states that political outcomes are substantially influenced by the ability of groups to mobilize resources such as financial capital, supporters, and political influence (Abdullah, 2019) By mobilizing economic resources, forging alliances with supporters, and political influence, these groups navigate the ethnic landscape to influence policy and electoral outcomes in their interests.

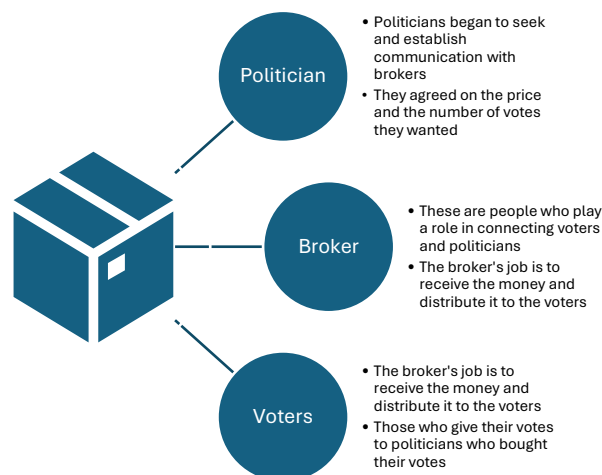
Results

Insights gained from field data indicate the existence of three different factors, both of which have different impacts on the research topics. The first factor that influences voters' motivation to exercise their right to vote during election campaigns is transactional politics. This term refers to the practice of buying and selling votes (Baniya et al., 2024), in which an exchange occurs between politicians who want to gain electoral advantages and voters who have the right to vote. The two factors identified, Papuan ethnic identity and the practice of vote buying and selling, show important evidence of a paradigm shift in Papuan ethnicity in the context of social movements. The second factor to consider is the perception of Papuan ethnicity, which is generally viewed as an ethnic identity. In the social and political context, Papuan ethnic identity has always served as a driving force behind the social movements of the Papuan people. Third, ethnicity, as the driving spirit of this social movement, is confronted with the dynamics of national politics, especially in the context of general elections, which naturally affects the results of general elections, which are influenced by changes in voter behavior.

Transactional Politics

The practice of vote buying and selling in the assembly elections in Manokwari Regency was manipulated by three key players, each playing an important role in the political dynamics. Figure 2 below shows the stakeholders involved in the vote buying and selling process in the 2024 election in Manokwari Regency.

Figure 1. The Flow Of Vote Buying And Selling

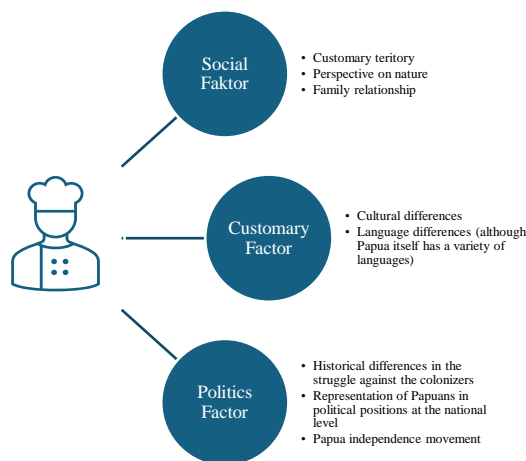


Three entities play a crucial role in buying and selling votes: party politicians, brokers, and voting rights holders. Politicians of political parties, as participants in elections, act as main bidders and seek support through negotiations to give them the opportunity to obtain the necessary votes to obtain significant voter support to win the general election. Brokers act as intermediaries connecting politicians with voting rights holders, often by offering incentives to complete the transaction. Voting rights holders, who are typically voters, have ultimate control over whether or not to accept offers. This process highlights a complex interaction between political demand and vote supply that can influence the outcome of the democratic process.

Perceptions of Papuan ethnicity

The components that make up the perception of ethnicity can be systematically divided into different factors. These factors, as formulated by (Henri, 2003) are social, cultural and political factors. Figure 3 below shows the factors that contribute to the formation of Papuan ethnicity.

Figure 2. Factors Shaping Perceptions Of Papuan Ethnicity (Senis, 2024)



Social factors that shape perceptions of ethnicity are customary areas, with there being seven customary areas in Papua, viz (Reumi, 2019):

1. The Mamta customary area covers the northern part of Papua starting with the districts of Mamberamo Raya, Sarmi, Jayapura, Kerom, and Jayapura City.
2. Saireri customary area covering coastal areas and northern islands of Papua, consisting of Biak, Numfor, Supiori, Yapen and Waropen regencies.
3. The Anim Ha customary area is located in the southern part of the island of Papua and consists of districts such as Merauke, Boven Digoel, Mappi, and Asmat.
4. La Pago usual area in the central mountains of Papua includes districts such as Jayawijaya, Pegunungan Bintang, Puncak, Puncak Jaya, Tolikara, Lani Jaya, Yalimo, Nduga, Central Mamberamo.
5. The Me Pago traditional area in the central part of Papua includes districts such as, Paniai, Deiyai, Dogiyai and Nabire, Intan Jaya and Mimika.
6. The Domberai traditional area is located in the West Papua and Southwest Papua regions, which include districts such as Manokwari, Sorong, Maybrat, Tambrau, and

Bintuni, Wondama, Arfak Mountains, South Sorong, Raja Ampat and Sorong City

1. Bomberai's usual territory includes districts such as Fak-Fak and Kaimana.

The diversity of traditional territories in Papua has a significant influence on the formation of local people's views on the environment. Papuans believe that the environment is an essential sacred entity, which is why protecting and preserving nature is an important part of their lives. Because their lives and their socio-economic sustainability are based on continuous interaction with the natural environment. This point of view is deeply rooted in their values and philosophy of life, which is inextricably linked to the concept of family relationships. This relationship is closely linked to the land tenure system, which is communally recognized and is a unique feature of each indigenous territory in Papua.

Perceptions of Papuan ethnicity are also shaped by cultural factors, including significant cultural differences. This diversity can be seen in the existence of seven traditional territories spanning the whole of Papua, where each region has a unique perspective on its natural and social environment. This has led to the emergence of different traditions, languages and social norms specific to each of these indigenous areas and confirms the existence of cultural heterogeneity that influences how communities in Papua understand and construct their ethnic identity. In addition to the cultural differences among other Papuan citizens, there is significant cultural diversity between Papuan citizens and other ethnic groups in Indonesia. Papuans have a unique ethnic identity rooted in the Melanesian ethnic group and distinct from the Malay ethnic identity commonly associated with the Indonesian population.

Political factors are one of the key factors in the perception of Papuan ethnicity, the importance of which dates back to colonial times. The history of the colonization of Indonesia by the Dutch had different influences on different ethnic groups. For example, Indonesians generally view the colonial period as a time of oppression, while Papuans hold a different view. For Papuans, the Dutch occupation is not always a negative experience. They believe that this era brought a rise in education (Drooglever, 2005). Proof of this is the construction of schools by the

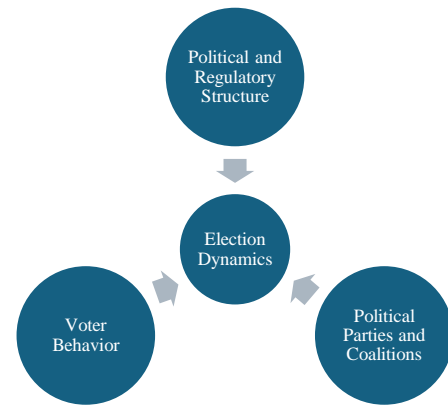
Dutch colonial government, which significantly increased Papuans' access to education and provided them with basic knowledge and skills (Drooglever, 2005). In addition to historical factors, the perception of Papuan ethnicity is also influenced by political dynamics, reflected in the representation of Papuans in the government's power structure and the existence of socio-political movements of the Papuan people. The movement was driven by the desire to achieve independence and establish an independent and sovereign utopian state.

Election Dynamics in Manokwari Regency

At the national level, electoral dynamics in Indonesia are determined by various factors, including the prevailing political structure and regulations, the emergence of political parties and the coalitions they form, voter behavior, current topical issues, the role of the media and campaign strategies, and influences from the Abroad. All these aspects not only affect the course of the electoral process, but also shape the social dynamics in society at the national level.

In the Manokwari Regency, aspects of national electoral dynamics have a significant impact on local political dynamics. Manokwari social interaction in the political context is inextricably linked to this influence. This shows that changes and developments in the national political scenario can have an impact on how people in Manokwari Regency interact and conduct politics. This interaction can be observed at various levels of society, including in neighborhood communities (RT) and community pillars (RW), as well as in religious communities such as church and mosque attendees. This dynamic change also covers a larger area in the context of the Manokwari Regent's population as a whole. Figure 3 below illustrates the social dynamics of the community during the electoral process in Manokwari.

Figure 3. Election Dynamics in Manokwari



The prevailing political structures and regulations have a significant impact on the social dynamics in Manokwari, particularly affecting the candidates running in the general elections. Voters must compete in the political parties' recruitment process. In addition, changes to the seat calculation system in elections require that election participants must optimize all resources at their disposal in order to achieve the top position on the sequential number in the list of candidates to be determined by the KPU. In fact, the top position in the list of participants had no significant impact on the number of votes received. However, there is a public perception that having a sequential number at the top can make it easier for voters to identify names on the ballot (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016).

The emergence of political parties and the formation of coalitions had a significant impact on the dynamics of the elections in Manokwari. The social structure of the Manokwari community, organized in the form of associations, formed the basis for the formation of coalitions of electoral candidates. The existence of these groups not only strengthens the support base of each individual participant, but also creates opportunities for coalition building between groups. The formation of this coalition has the potential to encourage the emergence of new alliances that become strongholds of support for particular candidates. This process initiates new patterns of interaction, facilitated by the role of mediator and policy, bringing together previously separate forces. The newly formed coalition had an impact on separating people previously involved in social interactions between communities in RT, RW, as well as activities in mosques and churches. This happens

because citizens are emotionally attached to certain support groups, so solidarity that originally transcended municipal boundaries began to wane due to the emerging political polarization.

The emerging political polarization contributes to the emergence of divergences, i.e. significant differences in opinions and political attitudes, which further influence voter behavior in the electoral process (Majid et al., 2021). Political polarization is the phenomenon that political promises made by election candidates to voting rights holders take place outside of the official election campaign regulated during the election campaign. This phenomenon has the potential to influence voter behavior, especially in the decision-making process. The practice of buying and selling votes is called the practice of political “packaging.” This activity not only violates democratic ethics but may also compromise the integrity of the electoral process.

Discussion

Conducting general elections in any country requires competition and competitive strategies from electoral participants to obtain significant voter support. A significant administrative effort has focused on ensuring the integrity of elections and combating potential fraud in democratic processes in countries with mature democracies. However, there is still uncertainty about the impact of politics on the dynamics of political competition (Chatterjee et al., 2023). In Indonesia, for example, the government has taken proactive measures by tightening regulations and electoral systems, which are now under the watchful eye of an independent regulator. These efforts reflect a commitment to implementing a clean and fair democratic process.

In the context of sociology, conducting elections with integrity reflects compliance with laws from the perspective of functionalism as part of solidarity and consensus (Castro, 2009). Law, in this context, is viewed as a tool for achieving social stability and consensus by establishing the rules of the game that must be followed by all members of society in order to create a uniform behavior that supports the continuity of elections with integrity (Rosenfeld & Arato, 2023). In addition, law also functions

as a social control to regulate and moderate deviance or behavioral deviations (Ghaleb et al., 2024).

Although law plays an important element in the formation of solidarity and social consensus in the context of functionalism, the dynamics of elections cannot be separated from the conflicts of interest that arise. Conflict theory, developed by thinkers such as Karl Marx and Max Weber, views law as an instrument of power used by the ruling class to maintain and strengthen its position in the social fabric (Merino-Sancho, 2021). The role of law in the context of elections is often a scenario that aims to maintain and strengthen the dominant position of a particular group in the electoral dynamics (De Girolamo, 2021).

In the context of transactional politics, which refers to the practice of buying and selling votes, the principle of legal compliance as a pillar of solidarity and consensus is eroded and no longer has a significant place in the social fabric of society. Resource mobilization as a constructive approach in social interaction has created a new identity in social movements (Drury, 2015) particularly in the practice of buying and selling votes between politicians, brokers and suffrage voters. This new identity, known as “Trading Vote” (Casella & Palfrey, 2019) has a similar analogy to the mechanism of buying and selling stocks on the stock market. The main interaction in this process involves traders, brokers and stock sellers who interact in executing stock market trades. In sociology, the provision of a new identity is known as the concept of labeling theory, which emphasizes that the label or identity bestowed by society can influence the perception and behavior of the person and others around them (Berk, 2015)

Identities that are not directly linked to the community can experience a shift in perceptions of ethnicity, particularly in the context of elections, as happened in the Manokwari Regency. The mobilization of economic resources by the political elite has played an important role in changing the perception of Papuan ethnicity associated with Papuan society. Based on observations, there is an interesting phenomenon related to the distribution of money by politicians to voting rights holders. With the help of brokers, politicians give a certain amount of money to voting rights holders as part of their

electoral practice. Field findings show inequality in the amount of money distributed. In particular, politicians of Papuan origin tend to give smaller amounts of money to voters than their non-Papuan counterparts. This phenomenon has impacted the results of the parliamentary elections, in which many Papuan politicians lost votes.

Conclusion

This research reveals insights that perceptions of Papuan ethnicity, generally associated with Papuan ethnic identity, may undergo differentiation in the political context. This is possible due to the influence exerted by political actors who act based on their individual agendas and interests. Thus, Papuan ethnicity is not just a static identity but can be reconstructed and manipulated according to the dynamics of elections. Taking into account the existing problems, it is recommended that more detailed research into Papuan ethnicity and the issue of conflicts of interest should be carried out in the future. It is critical to gain a deeper understanding and develop effective intervention for social and political problems by recognizing the importance of comprehensive analysis, which should be further explored in future research, while acknowledging existing limitation in current studies.

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