



# Institutionalization of Political Linkage for Members of the East Java Regional Legislative Council in Malang Regency

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**Abstract .** This article tries to explain the institutionalization of post-electoral political links. This research is motivated by the case of a member of the East Java DPRD from the Indonesian Democratic Party faction who succeeded in winning legislative elections for two consecutive periods, namely the 2014 and 2019 elections. Interestingly, he is not an original PDIP cadre and received the last serial number in two election periods. This research concludes that political links greatly influence vote acquisition during elections. Even though the votes obtained in the second period in 2019 were not much different from the votes in the previous period, the capital he spent was very little, even a quarter of that spent during the first period elections. Apart from that, the practice of political links has run informally through personal relationships between DPRD members and constituents without political party policies, thus creating a model of personalized linkage, not party linkage. This certainly influences the institutionalization of political party representation in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Institutionalization, Political Linkage, Elections, and Political Parties

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The institutionalization of political linkages in the wake of electoral events represents a multifaceted and intricate process that wields significant influence over the dynamics of political representation and party politics within a specific socio-political context [1]–[3]. This scholarly article embarks on a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the nuanced processes inherent in the institutionalization of political linkages, with a particular focus on the intricate landscape of Indonesian politics[4]. Our research endeavor is fundamentally motivated by a compelling and thought-provoking case study, that of a member of the East Java Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) affiliated with the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) faction. This individual's remarkable achievement of securing consecutive legislative election victories in both the 2014 and 2019 electoral cycles serves as the crux of our investigation. What adds an element of intrigue and significance to this case is the candidate's lack of origin

within the PDIP cadre and the curious fact that they consistently occupied the final position on the ballot in both electoral periods.

The overarching objective of this research endeavor is to contribute substantially to the expansive and ongoing academic discourse pertaining to political representation, electoral dynamics, and the intricate realm of party politics, all within the unique context of Indonesia[5]. Indonesia's political landscape is characterized by its inherent complexity, rich diversity, and a unique set of socio-political dynamics[6]–[8]. Consequently, the study of the processes that underpin the institutionalization of political linkages assumes critical importance in providing valuable insights into the inner workings of its democratic system.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of political linkages represents the intricate web of connections, relationships, and associations that are forged between various political actors, including elected representatives, and a diverse array of stakeholders encompassing constituents and political parties[9]–[11]. These linkages are not merely superficial; rather, they serve as the lifeblood of political processes, enabling the maintenance of political support, the consolidation of power, and the effective execution of political agendas. The institutionalization of political linkages, in turn, denotes the formalization and structuring of these connections, often with profound implications for the functioning of a democratic system[12].

The intriguing case we investigate here, involving a non-original PDIP cadre who achieved remarkable electoral success despite consistently being placed at the tail end of the ballot, raises captivating questions regarding the very nature and essence of political linkages within the Indonesian political landscape. Our inquiry seeks to unravel the extent to which these political connections are institutionally formalized and, crucially, how they exert a discernible influence on the outcomes of electoral processes. Furthermore, we endeavor to delve into the broader implications of these linkages on the political tapestry of Indonesia.

## 3 METHOD

To comprehensively and rigorously analyze the institutionalization of political linkages in the context of Indonesia, we judiciously employed a mixed-method research approach. This methodological framework allowed us to collate and triangulate data from a multitude of sources, thereby ensuring a holistic, robust, and multifaceted examination of the multifarious phenomenon under investigation.

**Qualitative Interviews:** We conducted extensive qualitative interviews with key political actors central to our research, including the aforementioned DPRD member, influential party officials, and constituents. These interviews served as invaluable conduits for obtaining rich insights into the intricate nature of political linkages, the strategies employed by various actors to cultivate and sustain them, and the underlying motivations propelling their actions.

**Document Analysis:** Our research also entailed a meticulous and thorough analysis of a diverse range of documents. These documents encompassed materials related to electoral campaigns, party policies, and comprehensive financial disclosures. Through this rigorous document analysis, we gleaned profound insights into the formal and informal mechanisms that facilitate the establishment and perpetuation of political linkages.

**Statistical Analysis:** Complementing our qualitative investigations, we conducted sophisticated statistical analyses of election-related expenditure data. This quantitative approach allowed us to quantify and assess the financial resources expended by the subject candidate during both the 2014 and 2019 electoral cycles. By doing so, we gained valuable insights into the financial implications of political linkages on electoral success.

## **4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The culmination of our research endeavor has unveiled several pivotal findings, each shedding light on a distinct facet of the institutionalization of political linkages in the Indonesian context.

### **4.1 Influence of Political Linkages on Electoral Outcomes**

Notably, despite the candidate's non-original PDIP cadre status and perpetual positioning at the end of the ballot in both electoral cycles, this individual managed to secure consecutive legislative election victories. This remarkable feat serves as tangible evidence of the profound influence exerted by political linkages on electoral outcomes.

In the realm of electoral politics, there's a fascinating case study that vividly illustrates the considerable impact of political connections on the outcome of elections. This particular candidate, intriguingly, did not originate from the core cadre of the PDIP political party. Moreover, this individual faced a persistent challenge in the form of being placed at the tail end of the ballot sheet in not one, but two consecutive electoral cycles.

Now, being positioned at the end of the ballot is typically viewed as a disadvantage. Voters may not reach the end of the list, and those at the bottom are often overlooked. Despite these substantial hurdles, this candidate defied expectations by securing victories in both legislative elections.

What makes this achievement truly remarkable is that it sheds light on the formidable influence that political affiliations and connections wield in the electoral arena. It's not merely a matter of policies, charisma, or popularity; it's a testament to the strength of the candidate's political network and support system. In essence, this case serves as undeniable proof that the power of political linkages can significantly sway the outcomes of elections, showcasing their profound impact on the democratic process.

## 4.2 Reduction in Campaign Expenditure

Our meticulous analysis of financial data revealed a remarkable reduction in campaign expenditure during the 2019 electoral cycle in comparison to the 2014 cycle, despite the candidate's continued electoral triumph. This finding underscores the candidate's ability to secure electoral support with significantly fewer financial resources during the latter cycle.

Through a detailed examination of financial records, an intriguing trend emerged when comparing campaign expenditures between the 2014 and 2019 electoral cycles. Surprisingly, there was a noticeable decrease in the amount of money spent on campaigning in the latter cycle, even though the candidate continued to achieve electoral success.

This discovery underscores a rather remarkable aspect of this candidate's political prowess. It suggests that, unlike many politicians who rely heavily on substantial financial resources to secure electoral support, this candidate managed to maintain their winning streak while spending considerably less money in the 2019 cycle. In essence, it highlights a unique ability to connect with voters and garner their support through means other than large-scale campaign spending. This finding challenges conventional wisdom about the importance of campaign funding and points to the candidate's skill in effectively using available resources to secure electoral victories.

Furthermore, this reduction in campaign expenditure during the 2019 electoral cycle prompts a deeper examination of the candidate's campaign strategy and overall approach to politics. It suggests a level of efficiency and resourcefulness that goes beyond the mere availability of funds.

Perhaps, the candidate focused on targeted and impactful campaign efforts, rather than resorting to costly, broad-scale strategies. This could include prioritizing key demographics, engaging with grassroots organizations, or leveraging the power of social media and technology for cost-effective outreach.

Moreover, it raises questions about the candidate's appeal to the electorate. Did their message resonate so strongly with voters that they needed fewer financial resources to persuade and mobilize support? Or was there a significant groundswell of grassroots backing that offset the need for expensive advertising and campaigning?

In any case, this finding challenges the conventional assumption that well-funded campaigns are a prerequisite for electoral success. It emphasizes the importance of strategy, messaging, and the candidate's ability to connect with voters on a meaningful level, which can sometimes outweigh the financial resources poured into a campaign. It's a testament to the candidate's unique political skill set and their ability to adapt to different electoral conditions while maintaining their winning streak.

## 4.3 The Informal Nature of Political Linkages

A significant revelation emerging from our research is the prevailing informality characterizing political linkages in Indonesia. These linkages often operate through deeply entrenched personal relationships between DPRD members and their constituents. Intriguingly, this network of connections frequently operates independently of and

parallel to the influence of political party policies, giving rise to a distinctive model of political linkage labeled as "personalized linkage," in stark contrast to the conventional "party linkage" paradigm[13].

Our research has unearthed a fascinating aspect of the political landscape in Indonesia – the informal nature of political connections. What sets this apart is the deeply personal dimension that underpins these linkages. It's not just about party affiliations or policies; it's about individuals forging close, often longstanding relationships with the members of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) and their constituents.

What makes this even more intriguing is that these informal networks often operate independently of and sometimes even in contrast to the influence of political party policies. This creates a distinct model of political linkage known as "personalized linkage," which stands in sharp contrast to the more traditional "party linkage" framework[14]–[16].

In essence, what we're witnessing here is a political ecosystem where personal connections carry significant weight, sometimes even more so than the formal party structures. It's a network that operates in parallel, giving politicians a unique channel to connect with their constituents and exercise influence.

This insight challenges our understanding of how politics functions in Indonesia. It underscores the power of personal relationships and connections, highlighting their pivotal role in shaping political outcomes. It's a testament to the nuanced and multifaceted nature of politics in the region, where the informal can sometimes be as influential as the formal.

Moreover, the prevalence of this "personalized linkage" model raises intriguing questions about the dynamics of political representation in Indonesia. It suggests that politicians may not solely rely on party platforms or policies to garner support or make decisions. Instead, these close personal connections can lead to a more direct and tailored form of representation, where politicians closely understand and respond to the specific needs and concerns of their constituents.

This revelation also sheds light on the adaptability of political actors in Indonesia. They are not limited to a single approach but can navigate the complex terrain of Indonesian politics by balancing both formal party affiliations and informal personal networks.

The coexistence of these two models, "party linkage" and "personalized linkage," illustrates the complexity of political engagement in Indonesia. It's not a one-size-fits-all situation; politicians often employ a combination of strategies to be effective representatives. Understanding these informal, personalized linkages is essential for a more comprehensive grasp of the Indonesian political landscape. It provides valuable insights into how politicians navigate and succeed in a system that values personal relationships and community connections alongside formal party structures[14]–[16]

The implications stemming from our research findings extend their influence across various dimensions of Indonesian politics and beyond:

**Reevaluation of Party-Centric Models:** The pervasive presence of personalized linkages within the Indonesian political landscape has significant ramifications for the established party-centric models of political engagement. The prevalence of personalized

linkages challenges the conventional wisdom that party support is the paramount determinant of electoral success[17].

**Impacts on Democratic Governance:** The institutionalization of political linkages, particularly in their personalized form, carries implications for the broader domain of democratic governance. It necessitates a critical and reflective examination of how political parties function within the Indonesian democratic framework and the pathways through which political representation is realized[18].

The research findings presented here have ignited a thought-provoking discussion and debate that reverberates through various facets of Indonesian politics and even extends beyond its borders. First and foremost, there's the reevaluation of party-centric models. The revelation that personalized linkages wield significant influence challenges the long-held belief that party support is the primary driver of electoral success. This prompts a rethinking of how we perceive and understand political parties in Indonesia. Are they still the central players in the political arena, or has their influence waned in the face of these informal, personalized connections? It also raises questions about whether traditional party-centric models can adequately capture the complexities of contemporary Indonesian politics.

Furthermore, these findings have profound implications for democratic governance. The institutionalization of these political linkages, particularly in their personalized form, demands a closer look at how political parties operate within the framework of Indonesian democracy. Does this informality strengthen or weaken the democratic process? Are these personalized connections a way for politicians to better represent the diverse needs and voices of their constituents, or do they create avenues for favoritism and nepotism?

There's also the question of transparency and accountability. How can citizens hold their representatives accountable when influence operates through these less visible, informal channels? This discussion sparks a critical and reflective examination of the broader functioning of democratic governance in Indonesia and raises the need for potential reforms or adjustments to ensure a more transparent, fair, and inclusive political system.

Beyond Indonesia, these findings have implications for how we understand political dynamics in other democracies with similar informal networks. It invites comparative analysis and sparks a global conversation about the evolving nature of democratic representation in the 21st century. In essence, this research has opened up a rich and complex dialogue about the role of political parties, the nature of representation, and the health of democracy itself, both in Indonesia and in a broader global context. It challenges established norms and calls for a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between formal institutions and informal networks in the realm of politics.

As this discussion and debate continue to evolve, it's essential to consider the practical implications of these research findings for the future of Indonesian politics and democratic governance. One key area of concern is the potential for polarization and fragmentation within the political landscape. If personalized linkages become increasingly prominent and influential, it could lead to a more fragmented political arena, with politicians prioritizing their individual networks over party platforms. This may result

in less cohesive policymaking and difficulty in building broad-based consensus on important issues.

Additionally, the role of money in politics deserves attention. If candidates can secure electoral victories with fewer financial resources by relying on personalized linkages, it may exacerbate concerns about campaign finance transparency and equity in the political process. Striking the right balance between individual connections and financial accountability becomes crucial[19]. Moreover, there's a need to explore whether the prevalence of personalized linkages can be harnessed to improve the representation of diverse voices within the political system. Can these connections serve as a bridge between marginalized communities and policymakers, thereby enhancing inclusivity in decision-making? Or does their informality risk excluding certain segments of society from the political process?

Lastly, this research prompts a broader discussion about the evolution of political parties in the modern era. Should parties adapt to this changing landscape by incorporating and formalizing these personalized linkages, or should they strive to reinforce their traditional structures and roles? Finding the right balance between adaptability and maintaining the integrity of political institutions is a pressing challenge. The implications of these research findings extend far beyond theoretical debates. They raise practical questions about the functioning of democracy, governance, and representation in Indonesia and offer valuable lessons for other democracies grappling with the evolving nature of political networks. As the dialogue continues, it will be important to consider how these insights can inform policy decisions and shape the future of Indonesian politics[20], [21].

## 5 CONCLUSION

In summation, this academic exploration has embarked on a comprehensive and intricate journey into the realm of the institutionalization of political linkages within the Indonesian political landscape. Our findings, gleaned from a captivating case study, illuminate the profound influence of political linkages on electoral outcomes, even in scenarios where candidates defy the conventional party cadre model. Moreover, our research underscores the evolving nature of political representation in Indonesia, as evidenced by the prevalence of personalized linkages that challenge the established party-centric paradigm.

The implications of our findings transcend the confines of academia, extending their reach to political practitioners, policymakers, and all stakeholders invested in Indonesia's democratic future. As Indonesia continues to mature and evolve as a democratic nation, a nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics of political linkages and their institutionalization is indispensable for safeguarding the integrity and efficacy of its democratic institutions. Consequently, further research in this arena is not only warranted but also imperative for the continued development of Indonesia's democratic experiment..

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