



# Transactional Politics In 2020 North Toraja Elections: A Social Exchange Theory Perspective

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**Abstract.** Direct General Election of Regional Heads (Pemilukada) is a means of realizing people's sovereignty in the region. Through regional elections, people in the regions can directly elect leaders who are considered best in fighting for their interests. Direct regional elections offer several benefits and, at the same time, hope for the growth, deepening, and expansion of local democracy, as well as its development and clean government (Good Governance and Clean Government). However, along the way, problems arise that have the potential to destroy democracy. One of the biggest challenges is the rise of transactional politics in every regional election. Transactional politics is the root of the practices of Collusion, Corruption, and Nepotism. Therefore, transactional politics is hazardous to the growth of democracy. Transactional politics will also hinder development and clean government (Good Governance and Clean Government). This research examines forms of transactional politics in implementing the 2020 simultaneous regional elections in North Toraja Regency from the social exchange theory perspective. The approach used is a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through interviews and field observations. This research found that 3 (three) forms of transactional politics occurred in implementing the 2020 simultaneous regional elections in North Toraja Regency. These three forms are (1) Transactional politics between Candidates and Donors, (2) Transactional politics with Political Parties, and (3) Transactional politics with Voters, which are divided into (3) forms, namely (a) Candidate Transactions with the Success Team with Voters, (b) Development Projects (Pork Barrel), (c) Positions/positions in regional government.

**Keywords:** Regional Elections, Transactional Politics, Social Exchange Theory.

## 1 Introduction

Direct Regional Head Elections are a means to realize the sovereignty of the people in the region. Through these elections, people in the region can directly choose leaders best suited to represent their interests. Direct elections offer several benefits and, at the same time, hopes for the growth, deepening, and expansion of local democracy, as well as the establishment of good and clean governance. However, along the way, issues

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have arisen that have the potential to undermine democracy. One of the biggest challenges is the prevalence of transactional politics in every regional election.

Transactional politics can be defined as a reciprocal exchange of benefits derived from power. Gary Goodpaster [2] establishes transactional politics as political corruption in the electoral process. According to Robin Hodess [4], political corruption is the abuse of power by politicians to gain personal advantages to increase their power or wealth.

In essence, the Regional Head Election is an exchange or transaction between Candidates and the people (Voters) as the holders of sovereignty. Suppose the election is conducted democratically, based on the principles of fairness and integrity. In that case, Candidates act as "sellers of hope," offering products known as vision, mission, and programs. At the same time, Voters are buyers who are free and empowered to determine which product to purchase [3]. However, in transactional politics, it is the Voters who act as sellers, and the Candidates are the buyers. So, when a Candidate is elected as a Regional Head, Voters (sellers) do not have the right to demand services because they have already been bought with money or other material incentives by the buyer (the elected Regional Head).

Transactional politics places money and other material incentives in a position of power. This means that democracy, where sovereignty is in the hands of the people, is replaced by the "sovereignty of money and other material incentives." This is in line with what Charles F. Andrain [1] proposed that someone with financial capabilities will be able to make various efforts to gain power. Even Hugh Dalziel Duncan [6] stated that "whoever has one cent has sovereignty to the extent of one cent" over all humanity.

This research aims to reveal transactional politics between Candidates and capital owners during the 2020 simultaneous regional elections in North Toraja Regency from the perspective of social exchange theory. The study of transactional politics is crucial for two reasons. First, transactional politics in regional elections continue to occur in various forms and appear increasingly difficult to avoid. Second, studying transactional politics is essential in conducting fair and honest regional elections to achieve high-quality democracy in the region.

## **2 Methods**

This research employs a qualitative approach. The researcher collected data through in-depth interviews with informants. The informants for this study consisted of Voters (3 individuals), Success Teams from three Candidate Pairs (3 individuals), and Candidate Donors (2 individuals). Secondary data were obtained through observations and documentation. The interview and observation results were then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interaction model.

### 3 Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 Families and Entrepreneurs as Candidate Donors

Based on information from Success Team informants and several sources, the funds used by each candidate in the 2020 simultaneous regional elections in North Toraja Regency range between 50 – 80 billion. These funds are sourced from the candidates' funds and donors of two large groups: Family/Relatives and Entrepreneurs. Almost all donors (families and entrepreneurs) are successful Toraja people living outside the Toraja area, especially in Papua, West Papua, Kalimantan, and Jakarta.

#### 3.2 Raising Funds Through Family/Relatives

Raising funds through family/relatives is the easiest way to do it. This cannot be separated from the strong social relations between family members in Toraja people's lives. Social ties between candidates and their family members/relatives occur in the regional election process and various areas of life. The strength of social relations cannot be separated from the substantial value of fellowship in the lives of Torajan people, including those living abroad. The value of fellowship requires that all members of the extended family, called to *ma'rapu*, help each other, assist and support each other in the struggle for life.

In Toraja life, successful family members generally live outside Toraja and act as figures and symbols of prestige (*dipolindo kalua'*) of a large family (*to ma'rapu*). These are places where family members ask for help, such as help getting a job, help with education costs and other assistance. Families in Toraja, too, depend on family members who successfully meet their various needs.

The three candidate pairs competing in the 2020 regional elections in North Toraja Regency are figures and successful Toraja people who have provided services to their extended family members overseas and in their hometowns. Therefore, the candidate's strategy to raise financial support through family channels is straightforward. Extended family members believe that if a family member is elected as Regional Head, it will help them. More importantly, the election of a family member as Regional Head will increase and/or maintain the prestige of the extended family in society.

In in-depth discussions with several informants, it was revealed that implementing the regional elections in North Toraja is not just a matter of regional leadership succession. Far from that, the Regional Election becomes an arena for fighting to maintain and/or increase prestige and honor for the Candidate and the family (*to ma'rapu*). Therefore, the Family Group will try to help the Candidate, including financial support, so that they can win the Regional Election.

Apart from raising funds, families/relatives living abroad form groups called volunteers, such as Surabaya volunteers, Papua volunteers, Jakarta volunteers, and volunteers from various other areas. The exchange between volunteers is an indirect exchange where all members work together for a common interest, namely winning the candidate. Apart from raising financial support in their respective regions, they also actively carry out campaigns via social media and intensely contact family/relatives in their hometowns to win.

Raising funds through overseas families provides multiple benefits to candidates. Apart from getting financial support, candidates also have the opportunity to get vote support from their families in Toraja. Moreover, the role of migrants, especially those with material power, is very determined in decision-making in various areas of life, including politics. The people in Toraja have lost their independence. They have been "hijacked" by nomads because almost all their living needs are met by nomads. The strong dependence of families on migrants impacts their political choices, which are greatly influenced by the political attitudes of overseas family members.

### **3.3 Fundraising through Entrepreneurs**

Based on information from donor informants and the success team, it is known that apart from personal funds, the second largest source of funds used by candidates is financial assistance from successful Torajan entrepreneurs overseas. Providing funds to Candidates is not accompanied by a written agreement but is based on trust and commitment between the Candidate and the Employer. However, providing funds from entrepreneurs to candidates is not "free" because of idealism packaged in the language of wanting to develop their region. Of course, there is a motivation behind this assistance, but it is challenging to be sure.

Besides providing financial support, entrepreneurs also play a role in pairing candidates for Regent and Deputy Regent. In fact, based on information from one of the success team's informants, the person who "matched" the candidate he supported was a successful Toraja businessman in Papua and Jakarta. Apart from being donors, these businessmen also play an important role in lobbying political party administrators at all levels so that the proposed pair is recommended to run for the regional elections.

Information from donor informants and the success team is that the forms of funding from entrepreneurs vary depending on the agreement with the candidate. Some help with cash, some in kind, such as providing campaign attributes, printing boarding clothes, and creating winning posts, all of which are reported to the Candidate. However, cash is the most common form of assistance, especially for buying votes ahead of voting day. In buying votes, there are several entrepreneurs who, by agreement with the candidate, cover 2 (two) to 5 (five) sub-districts or only cover 1 (one) Lembang, which is their hometown. Apart from being easy to rally their families, this method also avoids suspicion of disbursing huge funds from the bank. Funds are spread across several close family accounts, so they are not in large amounts when they are spent.

### **3.4 Analysis of Transactional Politics of Candidates and Donors in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Elections in North Toraja Regency from the Perspective of Social Exchange Theory**

From the perspective of social exchange theory, transactional politics between candidates and donors in the 2020 Regional Election in North Toraja Regency is a relationship of mutual influence (reciprocal) in which there are elements of reward, sacrifice (cost), and profit (profit). In the exchange, the Candidate and each donor have a goal. The means to achieve this goal is victory in the regional elections.

From the perspective of social exchange theory, Donor Candidate exchange is a direct exchange in the form of a reciprocal relationship. The actors initiated the exchange without any agreement. The exchange was based on mutual trust and commitment from both parties. The relationship that is built between. The norms that apply in this relationship are trust and commitment.

Candidates exchange with donors to obtain funds (money) to finance various political activities to win the regional elections. In this case, financial support from donors is an intermediate goal, while the final goal is to win the Regional Head Election and be elected as Regional Head. On the other hand, for Donors, winning the Regional Head Election, where the supported candidate is elected as Regional Head, is an intermediate goal. The ultimate goal is to obtain non-economic benefits (especially for family/relatives) and economic benefits (especially for entrepreneurs) from the candidate's election as regional head. Based on observations and analysis results from information obtained from informants and several sources, the exchange between Candidates and Donors, both from family/relatives and entrepreneurs, began with intrinsic exchanges, which developed into extrinsic exchanges. However, changing the exchange from inherent to outside is slightly different in the two groups of Donors.

Candidate exchange process with family/relatives due to strong emotional relationships, affection, and the desire to gain or maintain family prestige. These relationships take place in various aspects of life. Thus, exchanges between candidates and family/relatives during the regional election process are intrinsic exchanges based on strong social relations. However, after the Candidate is elected as Regional Head, the relationship begins to lead to extrinsic exchange, where the goal is no longer to elevate or maintain the family's achievements and prestige, but the family also begins to expect rewards in the form of material and non-material such as money, position, work, goods, and others.

The process of shifting the nature of exchange from family/relatives can be explained based on two propositions from Homans' exchange theory: the value proposition and the rationality proposition. From the value proposition, providing support so that the Candidate is elected as Regional Head has positive value for the Family/Relatives. With this success, they have the opportunity to behave to obtain rewards in the form of material and non-material. Bring about the desired behavior. Meanwhile, from the rationality proposition, the success of the Candidate being elected as Regional Head allows the Family/Relatives to take action to get greater rewards.

Candidate exchanges with employers also start from strong social relations between them. Candidates are friends, comrades in arms, and colleagues. This relationship makes it easier for exchanges to occur between the two. However, employers providing financial assistance will consider the candidate's commitment, as well as the chances of success and the possibilities that will occur if they provide financial assistance. Likewise, candidates will offer various rewards to entrepreneurs if they succeed in winning the Regional Election and are elected as Regional Head. Thus, candidates and entrepreneurs combine intrinsic and extrinsic exchanges in the local election process.

Furthermore, the provision of funds from entrepreneurs during the Regional Election can be called business capital to obtain even greater profits. The capital accumulation circuit with the MPM (Money-Power-More Money) formulation applies in this case.

More money requires power or authority. Because of their cash, capital owners gain political power, which can then be used to collect more capital, which will then be used again to accumulate greater political power.

Candidate exchanges with donors can result in positive social exchanges and negative ones. Positive social exchange is a relationship where value results in a positive number because the benefits received are more significant than the sacrifices given. Negative social exchange occurs if the sacrifice exceeds the benefits received, so this relationship tends to have a negative impact on the participants. Positive relationships usually survive, while negative relationships may end. According to Blau, an action will continue to be carried out if the reward received is commensurate with the action. If the reward is not proportional, then it is very likely that the action that was initially carried out will tend to decrease in intensity or even not be carried out again [5].

In social exchange theory, someone who provides rewards or goods has the ability to demand obedience from those who receive them. The person receiving the reward feels dependent on the person providing the reward. Apart from personal funds from candidates, donors, especially entrepreneurs, are the largest source of funds. Therefore, they will demand strictness from the elected Regional Head, whom they support, fulfilling their hopes through rewards of both economic and non-economic value.

The relationship between Candidates and Donors increases or decreases depending on the balance between what is given and what is removed from the relationship. From the exchange theory perspective, a relationship's sustainability is how much reward or reward is obtained from the relationship. This means that the elected Regional Head is able to fulfill the wishes of Donors in return for their contribution to the Regional Election process. At this stage, exchanges between entrepreneurs and elected Regional Heads will potentially lead to a productive exchange where both parties obtain benefits and costs simultaneously. They share a relationship as a relationship pattern that is mutually beneficial and produces costs that benefit each other.

On the other hand, if the Regional Head is elected, he will not be able to fulfill all the wishes and expectations of Donors; both those oriented toward economic and non-economic benefits bring disappointment. In this case, a negative relationship occurs. As a result, donors will likely move to support other candidates in the following regional election. This is one explanation why the incumbent in the third provincial election in North Toraja, even though he had substantial political and social resources, was unable to win the regional election contest.

## **4 Conclusion**

The increase or decrease in the relationship between candidates and donors depends on the balance between what is given and what is received from that relationship. From the perspective of social exchange theory, the sustainability of a relationship depends on the magnitude of its rewards or benefits. This means that the elected regional leader must be able to fulfill the donors' desires in return for their contributions during the election process. At this stage, the exchange between entrepreneurs and the elected

regional leader has the potential to lead to a productive exchange where both parties simultaneously gain advantages and incur costs. They share a relationship as a mutually beneficial and cost-effective pattern of interaction.

Conversely, suppose the elected regional leader cannot fulfill all the desires and expectations of the donors. In that case, whether they are oriented toward economic or non-economic benefits, it will lead to disappointment, resulting in a negative relationship. Consequently, donors may shift their support to other candidates in the next election. This is one explanation for why the incumbent in the three North Toraja elections could not win the contest despite having substantial political and social resources.

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