

Political Clientelism in Presidential Elections: Voting Behaviour and Social Assistance

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Abstract

Clientelism is a dangerous practice for democratic countries as it exploits poverty for elections. Despite the risks associated with clientelism, political actors in various countries continue to engage in it in election campaigns to win political contests. This study aims to understand voter behaviour and clientelism in the 2024 Indonesian presidential election. The study focuses on the use of the government's social assistance in "election campaigns" and how it impacts voter behaviour. This study uses mixed methods, quantitative surveys before the 2024 presidential election, and qualitative analysis, especially content analysis of documents in online media. The study revealed that clientelism in the form of social assistance impacts voter behaviour. The findings also show four critical factors: the timing of the distribution of social assistance, direct distribution of social assistance by the president, the current economic condition of the community, and the form of social assistance in cash and basic needs. The study contributes to the theory of voter behaviour by shaping voter behaviour outside the aspect of the voter, such as economic factors. Empirically, this research is also helpful for improving the regulations or laws of general elections in Indonesia, which can improve the governance of social assistance to avoid being used as a means of campaigning by incumbent officials.

Keywords:

clientelism; voter behaviour; presidential election; social assistance

Introduction

Since the fall of the Soeharto regime, Indonesia has yet to become a fully democratic nation. One salient example is the entrenchment of patronage politics (Blunt et al., 2012). As the 2024 general election approached, patronage politics became increasingly prevalent and emerged as a central aspect of campaigns waged by legislative candidates at both the national and regional levels (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2015). Currently, Indonesian politics is dominated by patronage politics, with political parties, administrators, and prospective legislative members working together to uphold this system (Mutawalli et al., 2023). Patronage politics in Indonesia are not limited to the central government, but are also

prevalent at the regional level (Klinken, 2009). Political actors in various regions in Indonesia use patronage and political clientelism to maintain and regain office (Berenschot, 2018), which extends even to village head elections (Cahyati & Lopo, 2019), which are voted directly at the village level. Incumbent village heads running for re-election engage in political clientelism to win a second term through government programs, particularly social assistance. In other words, political clientelism occurs at all levels of elections in Indonesia, from general and presidential elections to regional head and village head elections.

Patronage politics remain consistent at the elite level, while voter behaviour at the

individual level is more pragmatic. Voter pragmatism is evident in their increasingly permissive attitudes towards money politics, as observed by Muhtadi (2019). Indeed, elections are often associated with money (Harahap et al., 2023), and money politics raise the political costs for candidates from one election to another (Arjon, 2024). As such, incumbent candidates with access to funding sources are more likely to benefit (Virananda et al., 2021). Voters also link their votes to the amount of money a candidate provides (Halida et al., 2022). This clientelist relationship between voters and political actors fosters patronage politics, which is maintained by political actors elected and occupying positions in executive and legislative governments. This has been demonstrated by the various programs created by the government, including social assistance programs (Mietzner, 2012). The government provides social assistance programs to voters who are dependent on government aid (Muhammad, 2020). This social assistance influences candidates' vote shares or determines candidates' victory with access to these programs. Many voters expect assistance from candidates, and the aid is then converted into votes (Winters, 2016). In the 2014 general election in Indonesia, poor and low-educated voters demanded more patronage, including money and assistance (Shin, 2015).

In what ways does the relationship between social welfare, voter behaviour, and the actions of political figures result in a form of clientelism that affects the outcome of the 2024 presidential election? What elements contribute to the effectiveness of social welfare programs? Researchers have utilised both quantitative and qualitative methods to address these questions. Quantitative data was collected through surveys, while qualitative data was gathered through document searches in prominent online media sources.

Experts in political economy pay attention to clientelism, and research carried

out in this field in the last five years proves this. For example, research on clientelism in Latin America and several other developing regions shows that clientelism is common among politicians, who use and misuse public and private funds to support elections (Gonzalez-Ocantos & Oliveros, 2019). Sergiu Mişcoiu and Louis-Marie Kakdeu researched clientelism conducted by the President of Cameroon, Paul Biya, who established a centralised clientelism network through formally and informally appointed supporters (Mişcoiu & Kakdeu, 2023). A past study has shown that the development of a prosperous country is hampered by the interests of the ruling regime, which uses poverty as an object of clientelism (Yuda, 2021). In Indonesia, President Jokowi distributed new social assistance in the form of direct cash assistance of IDR 200 thousand per month from January to March 2024, spending on a budget of IDR 11.2 trillion. The cash assistance was given once in February 2024 to 18 million beneficiary families directly (Nugroho, 2024). Additionally, during his visit to several areas in Central Java, President Jokowi distributed social assistance without the presence of the Minister of Social Affairs, Tri Rismaharini (Malau, 2024). President Jokowi was even actively involved in distributing social assistance in various forms. As of February 2024, during the presidential election campaign, he directly distributed social assistance to the public at least 17 times in different regions (Febrian, 2024).

This study adds to the literature on the political clientelism practice in presidential elections in Indonesia, focusing on the efficacy of government-offered social aid, particularly the direct assistance provided by political officials. The findings reveal the roles of the timing of distributions near voting periods, the forms of aid in cash and basic needs, and the economic circumstances of voters receiving the social assistance.

Literature Review

Hicken (2011) suggests that clientelism arises from the relationship between limited exchange and contingency-based interests, and this exchange method is also present in democratic countries. Various clientelist exchanges are carried out in different countries, including political polarisation, dual persuasion, and support from political machines (Gans-Morse et al., 2014). Clientelism in a simple form is when politicians in power in a country or region use labour recruitment in the government sector, as well as spending in the public sector, to obtain political support, causing inefficiencies in state spending (Robinson & Verdier, 2013). As such, clientelism is another form of vote buying between voters and political contestants (Hidalgo & Nichter, 2016). Scott, as cited in Merkl (1974), defines clientelism as "the tactical friendship between an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron) who employs their power and resources to offer protection or benefits to an individual of lower status (client), who then reciprocates through support, including personal services, to their benefactor". In this context, clientelism is an exchange between powerful parties and potential voters. The former offers government-funded programs to the latter in exchange for support during elections.

According to Harrop and Miller (1987), voter behaviour is shaped by socioeconomic factors and political considerations. In the US, the government provides unconditional cash transfers to eligible voters to increase voter participation in elections (Akee et al., 2018). This is due to the government's failure to address poverty, which can lead to low voter turnout (Elder et al., 2023). Similarly, incumbent presidents, such as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey and Hugo Chávez Frías in Venezuela, have implemented political clientelism through social assistance or direct funds to prospective voters, which are used to mobilise their support and influence their

voting behaviour (Özel & Yıldırım, 2019; Penfold-Becerra, 2018). In Indonesia, social assistance is not provided for the benefit of the presidential candidate running for re-election, but for the family member of the incumbent running as the next vice-presidential candidate.

Political clientelism by political candidates is generally carried out by incumbents who have access to government resources, budgets, and programs. These programs are used by community groups and potential voters who are socioeconomically dependent on government programs and assistance. In many cases, these clientelist practices play a role in incumbent candidates' victories. It is a political practice in which political actors in power exchange government policies for voters' votes to secure an electoral victory.

Method

This research employs both quantitative and qualitative methods by using a mixed-method approach. Surveys were conducted to collect quantitative data, while online media was searched to gather qualitative data. This study employs mixed methods to investigate the impact of social assistance on voter behaviour in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia. The impact is measured through surveys, analyses, and the opinion of political experts, and by comparing the recapitulation results of the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia (KPU RI) on March 20, 2024.

Before the presidential election, quantitative research was carried out on the social assistance given to potential voters through surveys conducted by the Centre for Indonesian Reform (CIR) and Datasight Indonesia, led by the researchers. The surveys were conducted to reach a vast population throughout Indonesia. Next, qualitative research was conducted after the presidential election, and the provision of social assistance was distributed. This research also serves as

a test for the results of previous quantitative research conducted using surveys.

The researchers followed the following steps to conduct their research. The first is quantitative methods, i.e., surveys to collect data, which were conducted over one month, from mid-December 2023 to January 2024. The survey's details are as follows. The population included all voters who participated in the 2024 presidential election, based on the final voter list compiled by the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia. The sample size was 2,185, with a margin of error of 2.0%, a confidence level of 95%, and a control response rate of 95%. A multi-stage random sampling method was used to randomly select respondents for the survey. Each respondent was interviewed face-to-face by a trained interviewer.

Table 1.
General Survey Information

Population	All voters in the 2024 Election
Data source	The sampling frame comes from the 2024 Election Permanent Voter List created by the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia.
Sampling	Sampling was carried out randomly using the multi-stage random sampling.
Number of Samples and Margin of Error (MoE)	The number of samples is 2,185 with a Margin of Error (MoE) of 2.0%, a confidence level of 95% and a control response rate of 95%.
Interview	Each selected respondent was interviewed face-to-face by a trained interviewer.
Quality control	Quality control is carried out starting from recruitment and training of enumerators, field implementation and regular monitoring by the coordinator regarding the fairness of the data.

Source: CIR & Datasight Indonesia

The first stage is selecting 84 districts/cities by selecting 1 district/ city from each electoral district (simple random sampling method). The second stage selects 420 villages/

subdistricts, five villages/subdistricts each in the urban/rural category, from the 84 selected districts/cities (probability proportional to size sampling method). The third stage is selecting 440 polling places from selected villages/ districts (proportionate proportional to size sampling method). The fourth stage, selecting five people each from each selected polling place (systematic sampling, with implicit stratification; age and gender), as follows:

- Age category: 17-39 years
- Age category: 40-55 years
- Age category: > 55 years

Of the many questions in the survey, the researchers only quoted three that were directly related and relevant to the research topic regarding voter behaviour, social assistance, and voting in the 2024 presidential election. Other questions, such as the issue of developing the Ibukota Nusantara, etc., were not quoted. Question 1: What social assistance was received in 2023? Question 2: Did social assistance influence the choice of presidential candidates in 2024? Question 3: Which candidate pair for the president and vice president would be voted for in the 2024 election? The answers given by respondents to these three questions are then discussed in this article. Table 2 shows the social assistance received in 2023.

Table 2.
Social Assistance and Number of Recipients in 2023

Food Assistance (non-Cash Food Assistance/ Nine Basic Needs Program).	Accept 67,35 % Not accept 32,65 %
Direct Cash Assistance for Fuel Oil.	Accept 27,35 % Not accept 72,65 %
Village Direct Cash Assistance.	Accept 42,53 % Not accept 57,47 %
El-Nino Direct Cash Assistance.	Accept 8,05 % Not accept 91,95 %

Source: CIR & Datasight Indonesia

Table 3 shows that the percentage of recipients of the four forms of social assistance

provided by the government in 2023 influenced their voting behaviour during the presidential and general elections in 2024. As per a survey, 27.92 per cent of social assistance recipients said they were affected by social assistance, both for presidential candidates and political parties. In contrast, 72.08 per cent of social assistance recipients stated that they were not impacted by social assistance, whether in the election of presidential candidates or political party elections.

Table 3.
The Influence of Social Assistance Received on Voting Behaviour of Candidates for President, Vice President, and Political Parties in 2024.

Influential	27,92 %
No effect	72,08 %

Source: CIR & Datasight Indonesia

In the survey, social assistance recipients were to choose their preferred presidential and vice-presidential candidates for the 2024 election. There were three pairs of candidates for the election. The first pair, Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar, was chosen by 32.41 per cent of voters. The second pair, Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka, was chosen by 32.02 per cent of voters, while the third pair, Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD, was chosen by 19.52 per cent of voters. The survey also found that 16.06 per cent of voters had not decided or were unsure about their preferred candidates.

The vote count of the president and vice president candidate pair number 1, Anies-Muhaimin, based on the survey results of 32.41 per cent, which was higher than the president and vice president candidate pair number 2,

Prabowo-Gibran, by 32.02 per cent, still within the survey's margin of error (ME) of 2.0 per cent. This means there may be a difference of 2.0 per cent in the survey results, whether candidate pair number 1 drops by 2.0 per cent or candidate pair number 2 increases by 2.0 per cent. Candidate pair number 2 drops by 2.0 per cent, and candidate pair number 1 increases by 2 per cent.

The surveys to collect data were conducted over one month, from mid-December 2023 to January 2024. The study sample was 2,185 respondents, representing potential 2024 presidential voters. The margin of error is 2.0% with a 95% confidence level and controlled response rate. The data analysis used to process the quantitative data was a descriptive test performed using the SPSS 25 application. Meanwhile, qualitative research was conducted by collecting data through document searches. The documents examined in this case were news published by leading online media in Indonesia. Three categories of news were collected in this study. The first is news related to the real count by the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia regarding vote acquisition for presidential and vice-presidential candidates of the Republic of Indonesia 2024-2029. Based on the recapitulation results of the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia (KPU RI), on March 20, 2024, the total number of valid national votes for the 2024 presidential election reached 164,227,475. Most votes were obtained by the presidential and vice-presidential candidate pair Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka, with 96,214,691 votes, equal to 58.59 per cent of the vote. This was followed by the presidential

Table 4.
Presidential Candidate Pairs to be voted for in the 2024 Presidential Election

Anies-Muhaimin	Prabowo-Gibran	Ganjar-Mahfudz	Not yet determined
32,41 %	32,02 %	19,52 %	16,06 %

Source: CIR & Datasight Indonesia

and vice-presidential candidate pair Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar, who received 40,971,906 votes-or 24 per cent. The presidential and vice-presidential candidate pair, Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud, won 27,040,878 votes (16.47%) (Ahdiat, 2024).

The second is news about activities and social assistance development activities that were carried out by President Jokowi during the campaign period and before the 2024 Presidential Election. The third is news about the opinions of experts or political experts regarding the influence of social assistance provided by the president during the campaign and before the vote on voter behaviour in Indonesia. News related to President Jokowi's distribution of social assistance was covered by several media outlets, and many news reports about President Jokowi's efforts to distribute social assistance in different regions, such as Central Java, East Java, and Banten. The news also quotes the opinions of political experts in Indonesia about the impact of the social assistance that President Jokowi provided on Indonesians' voting behaviour. The political experts quoted in this research include academics from various universities and practitioners from political science studies and research institutions. This helps to avoid any bias in the interests of political experts and ensures the triangulation of research data sources. The list of political experts whose opinions were quoted is provided in Table 5.

The analysis for qualitative data is content analysis, which examines the content of news published in online media and the expert opinions. The experts whose opinions were obtained in this research were academics and practitioners who were not part of the winning team for the presidential candidate pair. Therefore, the authors considered their opinions objective and relevant to the research topic. The experts who quoted their opinions also came from various institutions, so there

Table 5.
Political Experts in Indonesia Quoted in Qualitative Research

No	Initials of Political Expert	Institution
1	R-H-L	Universitas Indonesia
2	A-P-B	Pusat Riset Politik Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional
3	D-K-S	Indonesian Political Opinion
4	U-K	Indonesia Political Review
5	A-P	Parameter Politik Indonesia
6	H-S	Universitas Airlangga Surabaya
7	E-F	Citra Institute
8	S-W	Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya
9	P-S-C	Voxpol Center Research and Consulting
10	E-S-F	PolMark Indonesia

Source: Author modification

was a triangulation process, such as the triangulation of information sources.

The content analysis used for qualitative data analysis in this study also relates to news related to political events published online, including the comments of political experts are related to the president's activities. The opinion of political experts is an expression of meaning that provides a picture of the conditions under which political contestation occurs based on the political symbols that appear. According to Danesi, semiotics in mass media reflects a specific interpretation that can reconstruct an existing system (Danesi, 2015).

Results

A survey conducted before the presidential election between December 2023 and January 2024 showed that the electability level of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka was 32.02 per cent. However, after the election, quick count results from ten survey institutions in Indonesia showed that the vote share of the presidential and vice-presidential candidate pair Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka was more than 57 per cent. This vote acquisition is relevant to the findings of

the survey conducted before the election, along with the voters who were influenced by the social assistance provided by the government. According to the survey, voters who received social assistance and would vote for this pair were 27.92 per cent. This exact number was calculated using a survey margin of error of 2 per cent. These results clearly show that the social assistance provided by the government under President Jokowi during the election significantly impacted the vote acquisition and victory of the presidential candidate pair supported by President Jokowi. It is worth noting that President Jokowi is the father of Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the vice-presidential candidate paired with Prabowo Subianto. Most respondents (the social assistance recipients) were economically disadvantaged: 29% were homemakers, 20.58% were farmers or livestock breeders, 15.14% were unskilled labourers or artisans, and 11.19% were small traders, totalling 76.68%. Their voting behaviour is shaped by social assistance.

The first factor to consider is the timing of social assistance distribution, which lasted from the election campaign period through just before the election. The government of Indonesia distributes social assistance to its citizens through a program. However, there is a potential conflict of interest, as the then incumbent President, Jokowi, personally distributed the aid. His son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, was running for Vice President. President Jokowi distributed the social assistance during his tour of the Yogyakarta region and Central Java Province (Suwiknyo, 2024). He visited Mungkid Market in Magelang Regency, Central Java, on Monday, January 29, 2024, and distributed the social assistance. During his visit to Salatiga, Central Java, on Monday, January 22, 2024 (Fathulrahman, 2024), he also handed over social assistance in the form of rice to 1,062 beneficiary families in Klumpit Field, Tingkir District, Salatiga City (Alaina, 2024). In addition, on Tuesday, January 30,

2024, President Jokowi gathered residents at the Bulog Pajangan in Bantul, Yogyakarta, and distributed social assistance in the form of premium rice weighing 10 kilograms to each recipient (Kurniawan, 2024).

The second factor is that President Jokowi provided direct social assistance during the presidential election held in January and February 2024. This assistance included giving 10 kilograms of rice to 22 million families throughout Indonesia. Additionally, a non-cash food assistance program was introduced during the same period. Each recipient received IDR 200,000 per month. In February 2024, phase one of the Family Hope Program was distributed. Each beneficiary receives cash according to their category. Pregnant women receive IDR 750,000; early childhood IDR 750,000; elderly IDR 600,000; people with disabilities IDR 600,000; elementary school children IDR 225,000; middle school children IDR 375,000; and high school children IDR 500,000 (Hardiantoro & Nugroho, 2024).

The third factor is that the community currently faces economic difficulties, requiring a short-term solution. The government provides social assistance to address this issue. According to the Central Statistics Agency of the Republic of Indonesia, the number of poor people in 2023 reached 25.90 million, equivalent to 9.36 per cent of the population (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Furthermore, the number of people experiencing near poverty was also increasing due to economic problems and climate change factors such as El Niño, which caused a shortage of food supplies, especially rice, leading to increased rice prices. This resulted in a significant price increase, pushing more people towards poverty (Farhan, 2023). The government claimed that El Niño also increased the number of people in the vulnerable category. In response, the President was directly involved in providing social assistance, as seen in Malang City, East Java, where each recipient received IDR 400 thousand

in social assistance funds (Pramudyani, 2023).

The fourth factor is social assistance in the form of cash and necessities, such as rice. Cash and rice can help meet people's immediate needs. President Jokowi has provided additional social assistance to 18.8 million beneficiary families through direct cash assistance. Additionally, he has provided food assistance to 22 million recipients. The recipients of the two types of assistance differ, with the total number of beneficiaries being around 40 million. This number exceeds the number of poor people in Indonesia, which is 25.90 million, as stated by the Central Statistics Agency. Social assistance is claimed to be provided to people who are vulnerable to poverty and need social assistance, with each recipient of direct cash social assistance receiving 200 thousand rupiahs per month. However, it was given for three months, and in February 2024, the amount was increased to 600 thousand rupiahs (Wijaya, 2024).

R-H-L, a social welfare expert from the University of Indonesia, has expressed concern that President Jokowi's distribution of social assistance may have political motives. He believes that politicians who hold state positions may use social assistance to gather votes during general elections (Basuki, 2024). Meanwhile, A-P-B, a researcher at the Political Research Centre of the National Research and Innovation Agency, argued that the provision of social assistance ahead of a political contest could influence public choice (Singgih, 2024). E-F, a political observer from the Citra Institute, believes President Jokowi's social assistance program could increase the electability of Prabowo-Gibran (Putri, 2024). E-S-F, from PolMark Indonesia, stated that President Jokowi's distribution of social assistance aims to promote a particular presidential candidate (Utama, 2024). The provision of social assistance by an incumbent president, whose son was running for vice president, influences undecided voters from the lower-

middle class. The number of undecided voters at that time was quite large, reaching approximately 40 per cent. Many political experts believe that it influenced voters to support the Prabowo-Gibran presidential and vice-presidential ticket, backed by President Jokowi, the incumbent.

D-K-S, the executive director of Indonesian political opinion, claims that President Jokowi's social assistance had a clear impact on the election results. The Prabowo-Gibran pair's victory in Central Java and Bali was due to the social assistance President Jokowi distributed to these two regions (Nugraha, 2024). U-K, founder of the Indonesia Political Review, supports this claim. President Jokowi's distribution of social aid impacts the electability of the Prabowo-Gibran candidate pair, as public satisfaction with President Jokowi also increases the electability of Prabowo-Gibran (Meidyana, 2024). A-P, the Executive Director of Indonesian Political Parameters, argued that people who were satisfied with President Jokowi's performance due to social assistance are more likely to follow President Jokowi's political support in the 2024 presidential election (Ibrahim, 2024). H-S, professor at Airlangga University in Surabaya, said that the distribution of social assistance, as was done in Banten Province, was significant in the efforts to win the presidential candidate pair supported by President Jokowi (Wahyuni, 2024). S-W, a political analyst from Airlangga University, said President Joko Widodo's policies, including the social assistance policy, are well-liked by the public. This triggered people to vote for Prabowo-Gibran (Taher, 2024). P-S-C, the Executive Director of the Voxpol Centre Research and Consulting, firmly stated that President Jokowi's distribution of social assistance was one of the efforts to win the Prabowo-Gibran pair (Marzuqi, 2024).

The effectiveness of President Jokowi's social assistance on voter behaviour is undeniable. R-B, a resident of Pelus Village,

Golo Lobos Village, South Lamba Leda District, East Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, acknowledged this. He admitted that he chose to vote for Prabowo-Gibran because he had received social and non-cash food assistance through the Family Hope program. He believed that the Prabowo-Gibran pair would continue President Jokowi's program (Dagur, 2024). Millions of other citizens voted for the Prabowo-Gibran pair because they received social assistance from President Jokowi. For instance, U-T, a resident of the Tingkir District, Salatiga City, Central Java Province (Santiago, 2024), voted Prabowo-Gibran as the presidential and vice-presidential candidates during the 2024 presidential election, indicating that social assistance distributed by officials in power during the general election plays a significant role in shaping voter behaviour during the ongoing contest.

Discussion

Many political experts consider the victory of Indonesian presidential and vice-presidential candidates Prabowo and Gibran in the 2024 presidential election was due to the social assistance provided by President Jokowi during the campaign and the period leading up to the election. This is because President Jokowi has a vested interest in his son, Gibran, who was running as Prabowo's vice-presidential candidate. These political experts' suspicions are supported by data collected by researchers, which found that approximately 28 per cent of voters admitted that their political choices were influenced by the social assistance they received. This is shown in Table 3.

Social assistance is a common instrument used in political clientelism. This is related to the socioeconomic conditions of voters in Indonesia, many of whom receive social assistance (40 million people). As the presidential election was approaching, the number of social assistance recipients was also increasing: 18.8 million families receiving direct cash assistance,

and 22 million families receiving social food assistance. Economically disadvantaged citizens are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of political clientelism as they are dependent on government programs and assistance. During elections, their behaviour is easily influenced by the social assistance they receive.

Nonetheless, the significant influence of social assistance received by voters is not the sole factor shaping voter behaviour during presidential elections. Several other factors also contribute to voter behaviour. These factors are related to the socioeconomic and political conditions of voters in Indonesia. Many political experts view Indonesian voters as floating voters. Indonesian voters are not loyal to a particular candidate or political party. This allows voters to make political choices in one election that differ from those they made in the previous election.

This type of voter behaviour has been observed since the New Order era (Honna, 1999). Furthermore, this pattern persisted after the reform era in Indonesia. Importantly, the persistence of floating mass politics underscores that this behaviour persists in Indonesia today (Hara, 2001). In addition, the occurrence of floating mass voters is also evident among Muslim voters. Specifically, in Indonesia, the majority of Muslim voters do not align themselves with any particular Muslim organisations or parties and maintain a neutral stance when it comes to political choices (Hadiz, 2019).

The floating mass theory can explain voter behaviour in the 2024 presidential election. The floating masses in Indonesia, according to a survey conducted between December 2023 and January 2024, amount to 78.14 per cent. From an economic standpoint, the floating masses comprise lower-income groups that depend on government assistance, with a total of 25 million. The floating masses are often targeted by clientelism through social assistance

provided by President Jokowi. This floating mass was evident in the survey, where 16% of voters had not yet decided on their choices.

Besides the floating population, another factor contributing to social assistance's influence in shaping voter behaviour in presidential elections is voters who do not identify with political parties, party figures, or other political activities. A significant number of voters in Indonesia do not identify with any particular political party. This results in a high number of swing voters in every political contest, whether general, presidential, or regional head elections. These voters have no ties to political parties or political figures, either in terms of thought or ideology, especially as members of political parties or political party officials. Political experts have highlighted the behaviour of Indonesian voters who do not want to identify with political parties. According to Fossati (2019), in Indonesia, voters do not have strong ideological ties to any particular political party or organisation, even though a few exceptions exist.

In other democratic countries, social assistance is also used by incumbent presidential candidates for political clientelism. This was the case in Bolivia (Lazar, 2004), and also in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election, with incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari of the All-Progressives Congress (Adefisoye & Braimah, 2023). Similarly, in several African countries (Kramon, 2017), incumbent presidential candidates used clientelism to win re-election (Rauschenbach & Paula, 2019). This occurs because government programs, particularly social assistance, are poorly accountable (Keefer & Vlaicu, 2008), making them easily personalised for politicians seeking re-election. The causes are also similar, stemming from socioeconomic factors that shape voter behaviour. This is also the case in several Western European countries (Colantone & Stanig, 2018; Anelli et al., 2019). The same is true in Poland (Ahlquist et al., 2020). Colombia

(Rozo & Vargas, 2021) and Turkey (Altındağ & Kaushal, 2021). Political clientelism becomes an easy option for incumbent candidates, building electoral support by using state resources, something almost the same as buying voters' votes using the state budget, which operates through the incumbent candidate's political network.

In Indonesia, with 40 million families regularly receiving government social assistance and an additional 18 million and 22 million receiving it in the run-up to the presidential election, the situation is certainly vulnerable to political clientelism. While it is certainly not the only factor influencing the victory of a presidential candidate supported by the incumbent president, this number is a potential determinant, especially when the electoral conditions for each presidential candidate are balanced in terms of vote share. Furthermore, Indonesian voters tend to forget events that occurred long before the election and are more likely to remember events in the final days leading up to the vote. Due to the gratification, voters feel indebted to the giver, especially when the gifts are tangible goods, such as cash and necessities, which are essential for citizens from lower economic backgrounds and the less fortunate. This perception influences the effectiveness of social assistance in the form of cash and necessities in shaping voter behaviour. As a result, voters prefer supporting the presidential candidate backed by President Jokowi.

The government's provision of social assistance under President Jokowi has, in practice, led to clientelism that shapes voter behaviour. During the presidential election, approximately 20 per cent of voters were economically disadvantaged and relied on government programs, such as social assistance, to meet their basic needs. In Indonesia, the distribution of social assistance was part of the president's political program to win the election for his son, who was running for vice

president. Theoretically, the political clientelism practised by the incumbent president, who used government programs, such as the provision of social assistance, in the lead-up to the presidential election to win the presidential and vice-presidential ticket he supported, in this case, his son, the vice-presidential candidate, is relevant to the theory of voter behaviour proposed by Harrop and Miller.

There are four indicators of social assistance clientelism in the 2024 Indonesian presidential election led by President Jokowi. However, Harrop, Miller, and Kavanagh do not discuss two of these indicators. These two indicators are the timing of social assistance as a government program and the form of rice provided to voters. Social assistance in the form of cash and rice was provided to voters several days before Election Day. This is a personalised form of assistance that each voter needs and can be used to meet daily needs. Unlike development programs such as building bridges, roads, and health care facilities, not everyone can enjoy or benefit from this form of social assistance. These factors contribute to theories of voting behaviour formation, particularly the momentum factor and the personalisation of political programs. The timing of social assistance during the campaign period and several days before Election Day creates political momentum. These factors shape voting behaviour and are discussed by Harrop, Miller, and Kavanagh.

The success of clientelism through the distribution of social assistance by President Jokowi was due to four factors. Firstly, social assistance was distributed during the presidential election campaign and continued until just before the voting. This ensured that aid recipients remembered the assistance provided by the president. Secondly, social assistance was personalised and distributed directly by President Jokowi himself. This gave the recipients a strong belief that the aid came directly from the president. Minister

and presidential aides' amplification of this message further reinforced this belief. They urged social assistance recipients to choose the president and vice president candidates whom President Jokowi supported. Thirdly, the voters' current economic conditions were complex and required short-term solutions. The social assistance program provided by the government and directly distributed by President Jokowi was a timely response to this need. Fourthly, the social assistance provided was in the form of cash and necessities. This enabled the recipients to use the money and basic needs directly to fulfil their living requirements. It was a concrete and proven solution that addressed the immediate and short-term needs of the voters.

The novelty of this research is the political clientelism that occurred during the presidential election in Indonesia, carried out by the incumbent president, not for his own candidacy for the next term, but for his son, who was the vice-presidential candidate. Therefore, this directly correlates with dynastic politics, from the person to the child who became the vice-presidential candidate. Thus, a combination of political clientelism and dynastic politics occurs. Political clientelism provides social assistance to prospective voters, impacting the candidate's victory, supported by the incumbent president. This fact is relevant to the incumbent president's desire to extend his term to a third term, which failed due to a lack of support from the majority of political forces in political parties and parliament. Therefore, theoretically, this research is also relevant to the theory of clientelism and dynastic politics. Political clientelism can be a strengthening element of political dynasties, and vice versa. The two have a reciprocal relationship, as in the case of the presidential election in Indonesia.

Conclusion

The practice of political clientelism in Indonesia, especially in the 2024 presidential

election, the incumbent president carries out clientelism in the form of social assistance not for his interests but for his son, the vice president candidate. These findings differentiate this research from previous studies on clientelism. The research also contributes to the theory of clientelism and voter behaviour, which suggests that voting behaviour is not only influenced by economic conditions but also by external factors such as the time of distribution, the actor who distributes it, and the form of social assistance. These two factors are the personalisation of political programs and political momentum. Practically, this research provides valuable information for stakeholders, especially the General Election Commission and the Election Supervisory Body in Indonesia, to develop regulations that prevent social assistance from being used for the electoral interests of parties, particularly incumbent officials. This research model could also be used by candidates in power who participate in political contestation, such as the president, officials at the regional level, and village heads, as clientelism reduces the costs of winning for political contestants through the state budget and is effective in shaping voter behaviour.

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