

Patron-client relationships as a mechanism of public policy corruption

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Abstract

This study aims to uncover corruption related to public policy that focuses on patron-client relationships. The method used in this study is a literature review. Researchers use secondary data in journals, books, and related articles to discuss the problems researchers discuss. This study shows that political policy corruption is one example of political corruption that assumes that a person's position can bring benefits. These two elements are elements that strengthen and support each other. Political corruption will not occur without a patron-client relationship. Likewise, patrons will not be strong if they are not supported by political corruption. Second, patrons who come from regional heads tend to abuse their power. Patrons will use their authority to impose their will on others. This mechanism occurs because of the patron-client relationship carried out by political officials with informal actors. This relationship has a very significant impact on harming the state. The scientific contribution produced in this study is to explain more clearly the existence of public policy corruption manifested by political corruption. **Keywords:** Patron-client, political corruption, public policy corruption.

Keywords: Financial assistance, political parties, political socialization

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1. Introduction

Dynamic government mechanisms make it easier for public officials to carry out various conflicts of interest. Public policies that the government should form to resolve public problems create new problems by formalising and legalising the interests of a handful of parties (Putra et al.

2023). Political corruption can be understood as a type of political corruption. This mechanism occurs when political decision-makers take advantage of their power to provide benefits for their power, status and wealth.

Public policy corruption in this mechanism includes corruption centred on political interests.

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This corruption can be carried out with a patron-client relationship pattern, where officials take or decide on actions that manifest in a policy based on the interests of a handful of parties. Of course, this is inversely proportional to the existence of public policy, which should aim at the interests of society (Winoto and Handayani 2022).

Various researchers have carried out several studies that focus on public policy corruption. First, research conducted by Riawati concentrates on the potential for corruption in public policies in East Java province (Riawati 2016). The scientific contribution produced in this research is that the community socio-economic management program is one of the interventions categorised as a corrupt policy carried out by the provincial government and provincial people's representative council by reducing the distribution of funds to implementing groups and program distribution. Second, research conducted by Asyikin Nahru focused on public supervision of public officials who commit corruption from an administrative law perspective (Asyikin 2020). The scientific contribution produced in this research is that the regulations made by the government only emphasise repressive supervision without any preventive supervision.

However, in this mechanism, the public can act as political control. The third research was conducted by Lestari which focused on political cartels in Indonesia (Lestari 2017). The scientific contribution of this article emphasises that the cartel party system has given freedom to political corruption, eliminated the system of checks and balances, killed the voice of freedom, and brought false hope to the established democratic system of a country's government (Mietzner 2015).

Political corruption and political fundraising are closely related issues. Corruption lawsuits involving politicians aren't only about benefiting ourselves (Napisa and Yustio 2021). More than that, corruption is carried out to finance political activities. One of the important analyses in the literature on political party funding and corruption is the cartel theory, which looks at how po-

litical parties and politicians do not compete but instead collude (Rannie 2021). Coalitions and collusion between Politicians and political parties have the same goal, namely how to access material resources to finance the party and all its political activities (Hidayaturrahman, Ngarawula, and Sadhana 2022). However, the problem of political corruption in the Indonesian context has deeper roots than just collusion between political parties. Collusion is a strategy and way of working for politicians, not a goal to be achieved.

The ultimate goal of political corruption is to continue the practice of political patronage, transforming Indonesia's legal framework and political system. Some of the research presented above has become a basis for researchers in determining academic gaps related to public policy corruption. Therefore, the researcher focused on client patronage in public policy corruption.

2. Literature Review Public Policy Corruption

Policy corruption by public officials has emerged as a new type of corruption that has attracted much public attention. This type of corruption is growing in Indonesian society (Sugi Hartono 2016). According to Sudirman, the kind of corruption that is currently often discussed is corruption that occurs in public policy (Syauket, Simarmata, and Cabui 2022) This mechanism leads to the measure of officials as implementers of government providing people's welfare, now turning to abuse of power used to benefit themselves. At this point, it appears that policy is used as a tool to carry out corruption or that the policy constitutes a new type of corruption called policy corruption. The policy was issued to disguise the perpetrators' evil intentions so they could rob the state of money.

Lord Acton explained that power will make it easier for officials to carry out corruption (Siregar, Haruni, and Anoraga 2021). Montesquieu's argument reinforces this, stating that people tend to have three tendencies to have power: maintaining power, increasing energy, and

exploiting power (Hasaziduhu Moho 2019). Hence, abuse of power refers to intending to enrich oneself and others.

Corruption in public policy gives rise to two views among political figures: law enforcers, academics, and practitioners. One party stated that the policies of public officials cannot be processed criminally because making policies is the authority, duty and responsibility that public officials must carry out. On the other hand, especially from a criminal law perspective, the view is that policies can be processed criminally if the policies taken by public officials are intended to be corrupt (Sugi Hartono 2016).

Patron Client

Patronage is a distribution of profits between politicians to distribute something individually to voters, workers or campaign activists to gain political support from them (Pratama 2017). Thus, patronage is the provision of cash, goods, services, and other economic benefits (such as jobs, positions in an organisation, government, or project contracts) distributed by politicians, including benefits aimed at individuals.

Clientelism is closely related to patronage, although, in some circumstances, not all patronage is distributed in a truly clientelistic relationship. Clientelism is no longer an effective way to gain votes without patronage ties (Prianto 2022). Clientelism was then translated further in depth by Hicken into three things (Edward Aspinall dan Mada Sukmajati 2015):

- a. Contingency or reciprocity means that every service or material provided by patrons or clients is a form of giving oriented towards receiving profits; the form of exchange carried out by politicians or their supporters is an exchange of material in the form of political support.
- b. Hierarchy is a condition where there is an unequal emphasis on power between patron and client so that one party has a feeling of attachment to the other party; this feeling arises because one party wants to continue

to receive support, assistance or materials. This is an important point in clientelism relationships because relationships are built between the relevant actors. These relations consist of parallel relations and vertical relations. An equal relationship is one in which both parties have equal interests and do not dominate each other. Vertical ties are found in the relationship between actors and parties who do not have authority and power. Hence, the relationship is unequal, with dependence from one party to another.

- c. Repetition is a relationship that is not sporadic or spontaneous and only takes place on one political agenda but rather continues on other political agendas and even in everyday life. This happens because one party feels they have gained experience from their abilities, as do other parties in political actions.

When referring to Shifters, patronage is the distribution of profits between politicians to distribute something individually to voters, workers or campaign activists to get political support from them (Anggoro 2019). Patronage-clientelism is exchanging profits for political gain through buying votes, personal gifts, services and activities, group goods and projects (Mardhika, Martini, and Fitriyah 2021).

3. Research Methods

The method used is a literature review. Literature reviews review the scientific literature on a topic and critically analyse, evaluate, and synthesise research findings, theory, and practice (Creswell 2016). Search for articles using science databases from Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and Clinical Key using keywords such as political corruption, patron-client, and public policy corruption. Inclusion criteria were full-text articles in English or Indonesian published in 2015-2023. The total number of articles obtained was filtered according to the inclusion criteria so that the final result was ten articles reviewed. Keywords such as corruption policy, patron-client, political cor-

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ruption, collusion, nepotism, and so on are used to find the articles needed for this study. The author conducts an independent analysis and chooses the title that best describes the subject matter of this study (Putra and Sajida 2023; Sajida and Ranjani 2020) The collected article results are then examined using a descriptive analysis method, which presents the facts. This evaluation and description of this example not only provide comprehension but also propose a new framework.

4. Results and Discussion

Patronage Pattern

In politics, patronage has become a dynamic maintained until the First World War. Government power activities mostly dominate patronage. A candidate from a political party who has won the general election, then the new person who has been elected has the right to appoint several people to become new officials in the government. This patronage system appoints people directly to work in a government institution through recruitment procedures but by being close to superiors.

The patronage pattern is not only a driver in the form of elections but also a strategy for winning an election by involving various resources. As Table 1 shows, the patronage pattern is also related to multiple types of corruption.

Patron client relations in public policy corruption

Public policy corruption is political corruption involving officials' authority in forming a policy. In this mechanism, officials use their authority to form various regulations or policies intended to benefit themselves and the groups around them. The corruption that occurs in this mechanism places more emphasis on the existence of patron-client relationships between public officials and non-formal figures. One of them can be seen in the relationship between regional officials and entrepreneurs, where this can occur due to policies that require entrepreneurs only to pay a small amount of tax to be able to set up business projects so that the regional government can permit them.

In this case, the relationship between the two is symbiotic, mutualistic, and can benefit both parties. Regional officials who form these policies certainly benefit from entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, entrepreneurs pay only a small tax to set up their projects. Practices like this will certainly be detrimental to the country regarding revenue. This can happen because taxes that should go to the state in large amounts are increasingly being circumcised by going into private pockets.

This patron-client relationship can also happen because of the political agenda at election time (Asmawati 2021). Many non-formal actors are

Tabel 1. Patronage pattern

Patronage Pattern	Refference
1. Cash grants;	(Hanham, 1960; Kettering, 1986;
2. Distribution of goods with various projects;	Bearfield, 2008; Georgiev, 2008;
3. Targeting loyalist voter groups;	Cendales, 2012; Allen, 2014; Mculloh, 2014; Aspinall & as'ad, 2015; Aspinall & Sukmajari, 2015)
4. It is a campaign strategy;	
5. Requires resources;	
6. Patronage only functions as a limited tool for political motivation;	
7. Patronage is closely related to clientelism;	
8. Dyadic relationships (between 2 people), personal and emotional relationships (friends of loyalist friends, family);	
9. In government, patronage is a reward for political assistance to win one of the candidates for office with a closeness pattern.	

Source: Processed from secondary data, 2024.

involved in the victory of district leaders by exchanging political agendas that can benefit both sides (Asmawati, Tawakkal, and Muadi 2021). This mechanism allows for the formation of policies that direct the group's interests. This will certainly harm society and the country. In other words, efforts that public officials should not do because they harm the community are forced to be violated because of the exchange of interests that occurs (Asmawati et al. 2020).

Patron-client relationships carried out by public officials will ultimately only lead to abuse of authority. Administrative Law based on jurisprudence in France, according to Jean Rivero and Waline, can be interpreted in three forms, namely:

- a. abuse of authority to carry out actions that are not in the public interest or for personal, group or class interests;
- b. abuse in the sense that the official's actions are truly aimed at the public interest but deviate from the purpose for which the authority is granted by law or other regulations;
- c. abuse of authority in the sense of abusing procedures that should be used to achieve certain goals but have used other methods.

The various explanations put forward by researchers are a real picture of patron-client practices that cause political corruption. The involvement of state officials, who should be representatives of the people in forming policies that prioritise welfare, is neglected because of agenda-setting, which is carried out for personal gain.

Public policy corruption cases

Several cases that have become the centre of attention where public officials have fulfilled their interests by forming a policy that they feel benefits their group include the following case that happened to Siti Fadilah, who was involved in making the bird flu vaccine, costing the country 6 billion (Setiyono 2017); 2) the case involving the Minister of Social Affairs, Juliani Bara, who committed a criminal act of corruption in social assistance funds during the pandemic. This shows

that there is an abuse of authority where public officials who are supposed to improve the community's welfare instead turn to attack the community during the pandemic (Hardiansyah et al. 2023).

Quoting research by Serena Chen et al. published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* regarding the relationship between power and social responsibility, individuals holding power who prioritise their ego will not help their colleagues even though they have been assigned to help. On the other hand, those who let go of their ego for power still help their friends. This means that power does not always encourage people to abuse their power (Yogia et al. 2017). Several cases stated above can prove that a lot of power is used to fulfil personal and group interests. This certainly has impacts, including:

- a. The economic impact where corruption can increase the value of investments. The high investment value is also due to cases of bribery. Entrepreneurs will bribe officials to get contracts so that the contract costs will be even greater. As a result of the opportunity to commit corruption in investment, the government will change the composition of public spending.
- b. The social impact: The government does not provide quality public investment, causing high economic costs that will burden economic actors. This condition impacts the high prices of public services such as education and health. High financial costs cause income inequality to emerge.

Another social impact of corruption is reduced public trust in the government because corruption disrupts government governance. The government reduces the provision of public services, the public funds available to effectively support economic growth programs, and its ability to help its citizens, especially people experiencing poverty.

The solution that can be offered from this practice is to improve regulations in which various mechanisms make public officials reluctant to

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implement policies that are beneficial to themselves. Another solution is to maximise the role of law enforcement agencies by improving legal culture. The solution that can be implemented with this perspective is changing how law enforcement officers think about their profession. This will affect their performance in eradicating corruption. The mindset that must be developed is that law enforcement is a noble profession that upholds justice in society. The law enforcement profession is not a profession that enriches oneself. The paradigm that must be built is to become a law enforcement officer as a service.

5. Conclusion

Public policy corruption carried out by public officials is corruption carried out by abuse of power. In this mechanism, public officials carry out patron-client relationships to seek benefits from non-formal actors in forming a policy to

benefit themselves and the groups involved. This collaboration allows them to create a policy that is more focused on their own needs and ignores the interests of society. The final results obtained are the impacts felt by the community. This can happen considering that many community needs are not fully met due to the agenda-setting played by public officials in forming policies. They exist to create various policies that can direct the interests of society in general. This phenomenon has mushroomed, and many cases have been revealed that are related to public policy corruption. Therefore, there is a need for a solution that can resolve this problem, which requires binding regulations to minimise patron-client practices. Law enforcement officials need to be firm in dealing with this problem. Considering that this research is only limited to public policy corruption without looking at the various practices in the field, further research is needed.

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