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# Integrating Social Values: Evidence from The Intermediary Institution in Indonesian Elections

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#### **Abstract:**

Many scholars called the intermediary institutions in elections as vote brokers. As a consequence of that, then they built an argument based on a transactional framework, especially about the motivation of the institution. On the other side, they agreed that vote brokerage was built based on a social network, especially when they tried to define the vote brokerage. It means, the intermediary institution occurred in social interactions. That is weird for explaining social interactions without considering other social values. It looks like social interaction is only about material value. Other scholars tried to be fairness by calling the intermediary as middlemen, but still very few literature built the argument based on a non-transactional framework. This study will certainly provide new insights into the intermediary institution studies, particularly related to the understanding of non-transactional amid transactional arguments that have been shown in many kinds of literature, as well as expanding the study of intermediary institutions which likely to focused on providing voters, to be focused on the establishment of intermediary institutions. We conducted a series of in-depth interviews with 45 people consisting of persons in the intermediary institutions, political party leaders, leaders of campaign teams, election organizers, and more than a hundred voters during 2017 - 2019 in Indonesian elections, consists of four Villages head elections, 2018 Governor election, and 2019 legislative elections. We found the transactional logic or material value was not the only one, even mostly was not the dominant value that generated the intermediary institutions.

#### **Keywords:**

social values; intermediary institution; establishment

#### **Introduction: Making Fairness and Expanding the Studies**

Recently, intermediary institutions in elections became a common phenomenon in countries, not only in emerging countries. They are a fact that nowadays we have democracies with various practices. The intermediary institutions can be found at least in Russia, Brazil, China, Argentina, Egypt, Paraguay, Venezuela, Nigeria, Taiwan, Thailand (Paniagua, 2022; Amaechi & Stockemer, 2022; Frye et al., 2019; Zarazaga, 2014; Hellmann, 2014; Gingerich & Medina, 2013; ; Wu, 2012; Finan & Schechter, 2012; Kennedy, 2010; Blaydes, 2006). In Indonesia, the existence of the institutions also be found and has been studied by several researchers in many areas (Asmawati et al., 2020; Aspinall, 2014; Rahman, 2014; Triantini, 2014). Almost every scholar called the intermediary as vote brokers or brokerage networks. In this article, I want to make fair by calling them as intermediary institutions. It is important to start the article.

Previous literature on the institution, in fact, indirectly provided an understanding that the institution is an intermediary, which bridges between candidates and voters. For example, Finan and Schechter (2012) described it with the phrase "... to interact with voters ...", which shows their role as an actor who helps candidates for connecting with voters indirectly. Several other scientists, such as Aspinall (2014) more explicitly called it a material distribution channel to voters, so that he divided into three characteristics related to their loyalty as a distribution channel. The intermediaries were interpreted as people who bridge between candidates and voters, to collect votes for candidates (Hellmann, 2014). Considering their position as an intermediary, some scholars called the vote broker as a middleman (Finan & Schechter, 2012; Scott, 1972). The main point is that we call them in different names, but refer to one institution. They are nonpartisan people or groups of people who are providing votes for candidates. They did not explain specifically that the institution is not partisan. But we can understand from their article that the institution is not partisan. It is very clear, to distinguish the institutions from the party machines which consist of partisan people.

Regarding why the intermediaries appear, some literature provided in different frames. For example, Blaydes (2006) explained its emergence as a result of low political participation. The authoritarian regime in Egypt became a reason why voters were not interested to participate in elections. They saw the government failed to satisfy public needs, then disappointed voters. The government party was also considered as part of an authoritarian regime, which was certainly not popular among voters. Then, candidates used social networks at the lower level to work as intermediaries. On the voter side, in addition to distrust of voters to the authoritarian regime as explained by Blaydes, there was a more transactional explanation delivered by Hellmann. Hellmann (2014) mentioned the desire of voters to trade votes so the intermediaries were needed to communicate the trade.

Aspinall (2014) provided a different frame, that the changes in campaign trends, from party-center to candidate-center, encourage candidates to build vote gathering machines independently, which based on social networks. Candidates can no longer hope to party machines. More in the legislative elections, there is competition between candidates in one party in one electoral district. However, there are similarities between the literature, inability to have direct contacts between candidates and voters. The inability is either caused by the inability of the candidate, or by the voters, in this article becomes unimportant, because we will focus on other things.

Regarding what motivation generated actors in the intermediary, at least divided into two domains; the voters' motivation to become the object, and individual motivation to be intermediary. The first thing is the most studied by scholars, while the second is still very few. We simultaneously saw it in the transactional mechanism, specifically in vote-buying. For example, Frye et al (2019) put the intermediaries in Russia when they explained vote buying and how the intermediaries worked by transactional activities in Venezuela. Finan and Schechter (2012) showed that candidates hired *community* leaders or *middlemen* in rural areas to promote certain candidates and distribute money to voters in Paraguay. *Middleman* can help candidates to do political mapping, which is useful in the practice of buying and selling votes. *Middleman* has direct contact and a better understanding of constituents. This serves to predict voter tendencies and the level of reciprocity.

In Taiwan, Olli Hellmann explained the practice of vote-buying controlled by the *Kuo Min Tang* party. To maintain its implementation, the party established a relationship with the intermediary the called them as *tiau-a-ka*. The intermediaries were recruited from criminal gang leaders, heads of volunteer organizations, or entrepreneurs. In Thailand, Hellmann explained how candidates also conduct vote-buying through the intermediaries the called them *hua khanaen*, who are usually individuals who have a significant influence in their communities, such as village heads, teachers, entrepreneurs. In Thailand, there is also a *Chao Pho* criminal gang that provides a more effective network, for impunity or protecting their business. In Japan, the candidates utilize the clientelism machine called *koenkai*, by sponsoring some activities which can introduce the candidate. *Koenkai* also became the actor who handed over the material or money to voters. In other words, he wants to show how vote brokers play the role of clientelism (Hellmann, 2014).

In Indonesia, the institutions are also understood by scholars in transactional frameworks. The previous literature examined the institutions within the clientelism framework (money politics). For example, Aspinall mentioned the intermediary as a consequence of electoral politics and clientelism. Shifting campaign orientation to *candidate-center* and the importance of clientelism, encouraging candidates to build independent teams, in which there are vote brokers (Aspinall, 2014). Meanwhile, Triantini (2014) emphasized the importance of the institution in providing money politics networks, even determining the effectiveness of money politics.

A couple of literature that discussed individual motivation to become an actor in the intermediary institutions are Hellmann's and Aspinall's studies. Hellmann (2014) explained they are motivated by the desire to get business protection, impunity, or employment. From Aspinall's article, it can be understood in more detail about their motivation. Aspinall classified them into three forms; *activist, client, and opportunist*. Activist refers to who support candidates based on political, ethnic, religious and similar commitments. Clientelist refers to who already has long-standing relationships with candidates, with motivation to receive profits later on. Opportunist refers to who are only looking for short-term profits. But unfortunately, Aspinall (2014) did not explain more about their motivations. Aspinall used the forms to explain predation and defection by them.

The main points that can be understood from the kinds of literature are two things. First, the intermediary institutions are always seen in the transactional framework, both as a factor in voter mobilization and a factor in building the intermediary institutions. Secondly, studies that focus on building or forming the intermediary institutions are still very few. Understanding of the intermediary with the transactional mechanism as above, cannot explain the phenomenon of intermediary that occurred in Central Java, Indonesia. We found that the formations of the intermediary institutions in the election are not based on the transactional framework only. That means the transactional framework that is commonly used by researchers in understanding the intermediary institutions needs to be questioned. Our previous article showed that social pressure influenced the attitudes of persons in the intermediaries (Tawakkal et al., 2017). This article will present field evidence that illustrates how the intermediary institutions were formed with some backgrounds and values. This study will certainly provide new insights into the intermediary institutions, particularly related to the understanding of non-transactional amid transactional arguments that have been shown in many kinds of literature, as well as expanding the study of intermediary institutions which likely to focused on providing voters, to be focused on the establishment of intermediary institutions.

To explain the intermediary, this article is based on a series of in-depth interviews with 45 people consisting of persons in the intermediary institutions, political party leaders, leaders of campaign teams, election organizers, and more than a hundred voters during 2017 – 2019 in Central Java province, Indonesia, consist of four Villages head elections, 2018 Governor election, and 2019 legislative elections. Interviews with political party leaders and success teams were due to their important position in building a winning team. Researchers also feel the need to interview election organizers, because of their ability to provide information about the campaigns and persons involved in campaigns. The questions were asked around the existence of intermediary (vote broker), the network structure, social relations between individuals in the network, and individual motivations.

The article will be divided into several discussions. First, the structure of the intermediary network, it refers to the organization of the intermediary as a network. It will be the best start to identify which dots were built by transactional logic or not. Second, the motivation of the intermediary, it refers to individual reasons to be involved in the activity. Finally, This article concludes the answer to how the intermediary network was formed without a transactional mechanism.

#### The Structure of The Intermediary Institutions

When we conducted interviews, some informants mentioned that they work in multilevel structures. An informant said, "kene ora kerjo dewean, ono atasan ono bawahan" (in English: We don't work alone, there are leaders and subordinates). They explained the team structure that became the basis for them to practice the intermediary activities. Some people stand as the village coordinators. The village coordinators were the main actors for village head elections, local legislative elections, even for governor election. Most candidates agreed that the quality of the whole intermediaries could be observed from the quality of village coordinators. In village elections, the village coordinators were the leaders of the intermediaries. They connected to the candidates directly. They were the person who responsible for built the intermediary institutions, generated their social network for below levels. The village coordinators recruited several people to work in Rukun Tetangga (RT), refer to the neighborhood level, we call it as the voter level. These people were required to mobilize voters in RT level. These people reported their works to the Village coordinators. It was similar to the local legislative election. Although a legislative candidate has an electoral district consist of many villages, the candidate's tent to connect to the village coordinators directly, without other levels between them.

Why did the local legislator candidates tend to connect to the village coordinator directly? It might be answered. For Governor election, the village coordinators were recruited by a local legislator who had an electoral district in the village. The legislators, as one of the party leaders that supported the candidate, directly coordinated with their party, based on the level of party organization from the district level to the national level. Not only one person who was recruited and stood under the legislators. Other persons stood as the village coordinator in other villages. As a note, in the local legislative election, one electoral district consists of many villages, it means the local legislator responsible for some villages. The division of area among coordinators was based on the administrative area of the village. Also, similar to that, other informants explained that they had structures. Some of them were at the village level. On top of them, there were local legislators. The legislators mobilized the intermediary institutions they used when won the office in the 2014 Local legislative election for the 2018 Governor election. A legislator said "wong-wong iki sing biasa tak jaluki tolong" (in English: These are the people I usually ask for help). Mostly, the

legislators mobilized the same people for his 2019 local legislative election. It means, they were a team for a long period. That is why they need to keep the team by connecting directly.

A different situation occurred in the governor election when the village coordinators did not connect to the candidates. They had other levels. On top of them, there were persons in Kecamatan (District) level, then stop on the Provincial level. After the village coordinators got information from the person in voter levels, they forwarded it to district coordinators, then from the district coordinators to the regency coordinators, until the provincial coordinator. Based on tracking their background, all people in this hierarchy came from the same national organization, and the hierarchy followed hierarchy in the organization. Difficult to find something like this in the village head elections, but not in the legislative election. Few candidates in the legislative election had a good position in other social organizations, mostly as a leader in district level. For example, Mr. F, are the leader of the national young organization at the district level. The organization has structure until the village, so he generated the persons for providing vote. Similar to Mr. F, we found some candidates are leaders of an Islamic organization at the district level and generated their structures in the elections.

Unlike the network above, other informants in the governor election told that they did not have structure to the Provincial level. For example, one of them is Mr. C. He is an entrepreneur who has more than 1000 employees. He communicated directly to candidates. He did not stand under other persons and had no person below him. It means He was a single person, work by himself. Mr. C was not the only one. We found some like him. In local legislative and village head elections, the most single persons stand on the village level or stand on non-specific areas, while in the governor election stand on a non-specific area only. Mr. C's employees came from a non-specific village, even non-specific district. For example, in the local legislative election, Mr. K was the single person for X village. Why we distinguish in the two-term? The single persons who stood on the village level targeted voters in a specific village, while the single persons who stood on the non-specific area targeted randomly.

A different form is reflected by some informants in the local legislative election and village head elections. We showed in the previous paragraph that the village coordinators had persons who worked at RT level. In another case, the village coordinators had persons under them but had no uniform. Different to before which had a uniform level equal with government administration levels then have work area based on that. Persons under the village coordinator had work areas based on their social or influential range and let them work as large as they can. An informant said, "sak kecandake, ora dibatesi" (in English: As much as possible, there are no restrictions). Commonly, these structures did not come from formal organizations that have hierarchical structure but from informal social ties. For example is Mr. D. He is a

religious leader who invited his followers or students to be persons who mobilized voters, as much as they can, and as large as they can, even beyond his village.

Based on the evidence, we conclude that the intermediary institutions in the elections have various forms, some had some levels, and some had one level only. Multi-level intermediaries consist of more than one level. This form can be divided into two kinds. First, It consists of the provincial level to the neighborhood level, namely the provincial level, city level, district levels, villages level, and neighborhood level. In general, there were several levels in the hierarchy of intermediary structures. It consists of voter levels, village coordinators, district coordinators, city/regency coordinators, and provincial coordinator. The voter levels were persons in the intermediary structure who have direct contact with voters. Refer to government administration, these levels are in RT/RW levels. The village coordinators were persons in the intermediary structure who stood in the village, arrange, and manage persons in the voter levels. In many cases, The village coordinators were the leader of the intermediary and connect to the candidate directly. The district coordinators were persons in the intermediary structure who stood at the district level, arrange, and manage the village coordinators. No district coordinators connected to the candidate directly. The city/regency coordinators were persons in the intermediary structure who stood in regency level, arrange, and manage the district coordinators. In some cases, the regency coordinators connected to the candidate directly, while others do not. The provincial coordinators were persons in the intermediary structure who stood in the province level, arrange, and manage the city/regency coordinators. In this case, they connect to the candidate directly. Second, multi-level but stops at the village level. It means only two levels; in village levels and voter levels.

Another form is the single intermediary. The persons worked individually, did not have persons below or above. They connected to the candidate directly. The single intermediaries were usually entrepreneurs or religious leaders. They influenced voters directly, who were employees or followers. Mostly, they were persons whom the candidates visited during the campaign period. Refer to interviews, the candidates prioritized them, because they had a stronger social relation with voters than other intermediary forms. They stood as the person whom voters appreciate socially.

Thus, the intermediary institutions did not have a uniform. There were at least two intermediary forms; hierarchical intermediary, and single intermediary. The hierarchical intermediaries were the intermediary which have some levels, from the voter levels to the provincial coordinators or just stop at the village level. The single intermediaries were the intermediary which only consists of one level, without persons below or above. They worked individually.

In this article, for explaining the motivations of the intermediaries, we focus on the highest persons in the hierarchical intermediaries or persons in the single structures. Why do need to focus on them? First, they connected to the candidates directly. It means, they were initiators of the intermediaries. Second, they were the highest persons in the structures. It means, they were founders of the intermediaries. The reasons are enough to give understanding that they were the main persons who generate the intermediaries. Next, we can call them as the leader of the intermediaries.

#### Generating The Intermediaries: Motivations

Explaining the process, from the other relationships existed before the intermediary relationships, raises an important question that can present different knowledge than previous research on literature. What are the values that generated the process? In simple words, what motivations do the intermediary leaders have? This section will discuss it.

Some informants said that they have a responsibility when their friends become candidates. Even in the governor election, if their friends were not the candidates, but the local legislators which their political party supported a candidate in the governor election. For example, Mr. R did not know the candidate he supports, never meet him. He agreed to provide voters for the candidate because his friend asked him to do it. His friend is a local legislator. Honestly, he did not care about the relationship with the candidate, but the friendship between him and the local legislator. It means he provided voters for the candidate in the governor election because of the local legislator. Without the legislator, he would not. Even until the election was over, he never met the candidate. The responsibility was easy to be understood in the legislative and village head elections, because they were real friends of the candidate, had interaction in daily life.

Others said that they have a responsibility when a person in their organization runs in the election. They thought the winning will be the organization winning. The candidate looked stand as a representation of the organization. For example, we observed a couple of the intermediary meetings where the audiences were the intermediary leaders. We identified the candidate's speech at the meeting. The candidate talked to the audience that the candidate came from the organization, and the winning would be the organization winning, then the candidate has a good commitment to developing the organization. The candidate tried to strengthen the identity of the organization and grow the spirit of the organization in the audience. Even, many times the candidate shouted the organization's slogan. We interviewed what they think about the meetings. The intermediary leaders said that the candidate's speech was rational, and provide voters for the organization's goal.

Almost similar to above, some informants have a responsibility when a person in their school run in the election. For example, a candidate was a part of the Islamic leader's family. The intermediary leaders felt getting Islamic knowledge from the Islamic leader, then they built the intermediary institutions to provide voters for the candidate. We conducted in-depth interviews with them, they supported the candidate because it is the appropriateness of a student for their teacher, although to his son. Few informants, even would not care if the candidate wins or lose. The important thing is,

they helped the candidate. If he wins, that will be better. They thought the winning will conserve their school. The others said the winning will increase the prestige of their school, especially the Islamic leader.

Different evidence is shown by other informants. An intermediary leader agreed to serve the intermediary institution because the candidate promised will share the bureaucracy benefit if the candidate gets the office. Before, the candidate and the intermediary leader have never known and never met, until a person took the candidate to the intermediary leader. He will get some personal benefit or will not, is not a point in here. We would not discuss how it will be important, to keep this article on track. One we know, personally because of the promise so a person agreed to provide voters for the candidate. Why we said "personal" because it is personal, no legal institutions were involved in the agreement, although the intermediary leader has a high position in a local government institution.

The relationships in the previous section, correlate to values or motivations that generate the intermediary leaders to built the intermediary institutions. We concluded six forms of relationship between the intermediary leaders and the candidates, namely the kindship, the friendship, the affiliation, the school, the business, and non-relationships. Now, we conclude the values around them. We identify the values that form commitments between the intermediary leaders and the candidates. The commitment manifest in solidarity value and material value. Solidarity is the value that encourages persons to help a candidate because they have considered themselves as part of a candidate's environment. This value appears in the kindship solidarity, the friendship solidarity, the affiliation solidarity, the business solidarity, and the school solidarity.

In the friendship solidarity, the intermediary leaders were responsible for providing voters, because they felt that they have friends who run in the election and need their help. Likewise in the governor election, in the party intermediary institution, these feelings appeared between the intermediary leaders and the local legislator who supported the candidates. In a few cases, voters knew that the candidate has friendly relations with the intermediary leaders. That means the friendship solidarity can be directed to local politicians and the candidates. In the business solidarity, the intermediary leaders felt that they have a boss who run in the election and need their help. For a person who gave them a job, the responsibility was common.

In affiliation solidarity, the intermediary leaders need to help the candidates because they felt they have the same organization. The establishment of the intermediary institutions founded by the organizational hierarchy. Commonly, the intermediary leaders were the organization leaders at the provincial level or district level. But the intermediary institution did not always build by the organization leaders in lower. For example, the village coordinators were not the village leaders only. We found in some villages, the village coordinators had no high position in the organization structures. Needs to present, we do not categorize party identification as

affiliation solidarity, to avoid confusion between the party and non-party intermediary institution. We need to make clear that the intermediaries are a non-partisan institution and do not use party identification logic to generate them. Although they are generated by local politicians, they have no political or ideological logic.

The most interesting in the election is the existence of school solidarity. The intermediary leaders helped the candidates because they felt they are students of the candidate family. The intermediary leaders thought that they need to appreciate the teachers by helping their sons. It will be bad if they did not help him because their father has shown the truth and the Islamic values to them. In the governor election, this solidarity was only found in the non-party intermediaries. This type of solidarity was possible to appear in the party intermediary institutions, but we do not categorize them as the school solidarity. The reason is that the party intermediary institutions have been existed in the last election, in a different situation and candidate background, then were regenerated for the other elections. It means the school solidarity might exist, but as a complementary value, not main values.

Another value was material. The material value was the value that encouraged persons to help a candidate because they want to get material benefit from the election. This value appeared in the non-relationship form. Why we capture this value is because they have no social relationships that have been existed before the election. So we can not identify solidarity values there. It is so different from solidarity. In solidarity, the intermediary leaders might hope personal benefit but had no agreements. If they get benefit then, that will be just the effect of the social relationship, not the main points. While in material value, personal benefit and agreements were the main points. The intermediary would not be generated without the agreements and the possibility to get the personal benefit.

#### Conclusion

When scholars explained the intermediary institutions in transactional framework, for example, Frye et al, Hellmann, Ocantos et al, Blaydes and other scholars, we found evidence that the transactional was not the only one value. They are not wrong but they did not catch the variations. While they did not, another scholar took us to the gate of the variations but he turned us back to the transactional framework. For example, Aspinall mentioned activist brokers, but unfortunately, he did not explain it more. Refers to how Aspinall defined the activist brokers, it looks that they were generated by an ideology, trust, or program. It presented that we have the institution which was not generated by the transactional mechanism.

For presenting the variations, we moved step by step. First, we explained the structures in two forms of the intermediary, namely the hierarchical intermediaries, the single intermediaries. At this point, for explaining the values that generate the intermediary institutions, then we focused on the intermediary leaders who had a

direct connection with the candidates and the main actor who built the intermediary institutions.

We identified six relationship background that occurred before the election, between the intermediary leaders and the candidates, namely the kindship, the friendship, the affiliation, the school, the business, and the non-relationships. The relationships moved to be the intermediary relationship in two processes. One is extending when the intermediary relationships were just transformation from other relationships that occurred before the elections. Another is creating, when the intermediary relationships had no social relationships which occurred before the election. Finally, we understood what values generated the processes. The solidarity value generated the changes from the friendships, the affiliations, the business, and the school relationship, to the intermediary relationships. The material value generated from non-relationship to the intermediary relationships.

It is clear, that the intermediary institutions have variations on how they were generated. Not only transactional or material value but solidarity values, also. One more time, the scholars are not wrong, they just did not focus on and investigate it deeply so they could not catch the variation. What we found, presents a new understanding of how the intermediary institutions were generated. But, this study raises some questions that can not be answered by our research. For example, how the intermediary institutions work, by considering those values, include finance sources, methods, the effects, and so on. The scholars are welcome to focus on this area and explain what we could not.

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