



## The Relationship Pattern Between Political Parties, Candidate Figures, and Constituents in the Regional Head Election Contest in Makassar City

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### Abstract

This study aims to describe the pattern of relations between political parties, figures and constituents in the regional head elections in Makassar City, to elaborate on the political communication strategies of figures in building patterns of relations with political parties and constituents in the regional head elections in Makassar City, and to find relevant theoretical solutions in providing political education for constituents and increasing active participation of constituents in the regional head elections in Makassar City. The method used is a Qualitative approach, with the research paradigm used, namely Post Positivist. The results of the study indicate that the relationship between political parties and candidate figures is transactional, where material interests and power are the main binders. This relationship often exploits and dominates constituents, prioritizing symbolic politics and the use of money as the main tool in building relationships.

**Keywords:** Relationship Patterns, Politics, Power, Communication.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Differences in views and political attitudes of constituents often cause horizontal conflicts, not only between political elites and figures from each presidential or regional head candidate pair, but also between constituent groups supporting certain candidate pairs [1]. This phenomenon often occurs in every political contestation held, both in the context of presidential and vice presidential elections, and in regional head elections. This is the impact of the relationship pattern between political parties and constituents, as well as between candidate figures and constituents that are not balanced.

The pattern of relations that are built in an unbalanced manner between political parties, figures and constituents in political contests always has implications for the emergence of various "conflicts" of interest [2]. These conflicts occur and spread horizontally among constituents [3]. In reality, the conflicts that often occur in every political battle or contest can be classified into two forms, namely in the form of non-physical, namely the existence of mutual attacks through the formation of public opinion, and physical conflict, namely the existence of physical opposition carried out by each individual or group of supporters of each particular candidate pair.

Horizontal conflict as one of the consequences of an unbalanced relationship pattern in political contestation, not only occurs between political elites, between groups or factions that are contesting, but also spreads massively among constituents [4]. This condition will cause a very complex political and social crisis. The social crisis referred to here is the imbalance of information received by constituents which results in confusion in filtering information to be accepted. Furthermore, the imbalance of information as a form of propaganda carried out by political elites through the mass media, is a form of imbalance in the relationship pattern that exists between political parties, figures and constituents [5]. This will give rise to various perceptions and even conflicting actions among constituents, which can disrupt political security and stability, even to the point of physical clashes between constituent groups who have different political views and attitudes.

The existence of a pattern of relations in the form of political contraction and social conflict that occurs due to political struggles, has a very large impact on the political economy [6]. The political contraction and conflict that occur cannot be separated from the election violations committed by each successful team of the regional head candidate pairs. In the implementation of the 2020 simultaneous regional head elections, various violations occurred that had an

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impact on the worsening social situation. Moreover, in the implementation of the 2020 simultaneous regional elections, it took place in the midst of the Covid 19 pandemic [7]. Data from the Bawaslu of the Republic of Indonesia shows that there were 18,668 cases or problems that occurred in the implementation of the 2020 simultaneous regional head elections (Pilkada).

The Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu) of the Republic of Indonesia has identified the regions with the highest number of reported election violations. East Java ranks first with 3,002 recorded cases, followed by South Sulawesi with 571 cases, Central Sulawesi with 470 cases, West Java with 390 cases, and Central Java with 364 cases [8]. This data highlights that South Sulawesi ranks second in terms of reported election violations. Specifically, the highest incidence of violations in South Sulawesi occurred during the 2020 regional head elections in Makassar City [9].

The issues that arose during the regional head elections in Makassar were significantly influenced by differing perspectives and political attitudes among constituents. These differences led to the emergence of a relational pattern characterized by political polarization and social conflict during the election contest [10]. The situation escalated as campaign teams for the mayoral and deputy mayoral candidates promoted their respective programs and the qualifications of their candidates. In this context, the main problem identified was the emergence of an imbalanced relational pattern, resulting in social polarization and horizontal conflicts among constituents.

This study aims to describe the pattern of relations between political parties, figures and constituents in the regional head elections in Makassar City, to elaborate on the political communication strategies of figures in building patterns of relations with political parties and constituents in the regional head elections in Makassar City, and to find relevant theoretical solutions in providing political education for constituents and increasing active participation of constituents in the regional head elections in Makassar City.

## 2. METHOD

The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method, with the research paradigm used, namely Post Positivist. Qualitative research methods are in-depth approaches and focus on understanding the social and cultural context, as well as the experiences of the subjects being studied [11]. This method aims to explore meaning and understand phenomena holistically, by paying special attention to individual or group perspectives. The location of the research was carried out in Makassar City, while the

focus of the research was the Relationship Pattern. This research was conducted from January 2023 to August 2024.

The data sources used in this study are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is taken through in-depth direct interviews, field notes, observation notes, or written materials obtained through direct interaction between researchers and participants. While secondary data is data obtained through literature reviews, various documents needed, or research results that are relevant and related to the research, such as journals, books, or electronic archives containing data relevant to the research topic [12]. The first data collection technique used in this study is observation. Observations are carried out at the research locus, namely political parties, candidate figures and constituents in Makassar City. The second technique is in-depth interviews with several informants who are considered worthy and know information related to the relationship patterns that occur in the regional election contestation in Makassar City, and the last data collection technique is documentation, namely by collecting information through electronic archives in the mass media, related to news coverage of regional head candidate figures in Makassar City.

The data obtained were analyzed inductively. The collected data were examined by identifying patterns, themes, and meanings that naturally emerged, related to the relational patterns in the local election contestation in Makassar City. The researcher employed a flexible and reflective approach to interpret and provide a rich explanation of the collected data. The result of this analysis was in the form of a detailed description, theories developed based on the data, or a holistic depiction of the phenomenon under study. The final process involved drawing conclusions.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Transactional Relationship between Political Parties and Figures

The transactional relationship between political parties and figures illustrates the dynamic of mutually beneficial interactions between these two entities within a political context. In this relationship, political parties and figures are interdependent, relying on one another to achieve shared political goals and interests [13]. Woolley's perspective aligns with the context of transactional relationships that occur in the democratic process, where the transactional relationship between political parties and figures is a common reality within political dynamics, influencing policy formation and political decision-making. The following are the results

of observations from several sources that have been gathered and subsequently analyzed as follows:

**Table 1. Results of Observation Based on Observed Aspects**

No	Observed Aspects	Observation Results	Source
1	Mutually Beneficial Interaction	There is a mutual dependence between political parties and candidate figures in winning the election.	Documents from the Makassar local election panel and election reports.
2	Pragmatic Interests	The negotiation between political parties and candidates focuses on the distribution of power and strategic electoral programs.	Local media reports, political analysis reports, and pre-election survey results.
3	The Influence of Candidate Figures in Negotiations.	Candidates with high popularity tend to have a significant influence on party decisions.	Campaign team discussions and opinion articles from political analysts.
4	Risks of Corruption and Nepotism Practices	There is potential for corrupt practices related to the offering of positions and projects to certain candidate figures.	Documentation of political corruption cases, investigative journalistic reports, and public panel discussions
5	Logistics and Infrastructure Support	The party provides logistical support such as campaign funds, campaign team networks, and media access.	Campaign news, and party financial reports in elections
6	Exchange of Resources and Political Support	There is an exchange of financial and political support, where parties gain legitimacy from popular figures.	Political campaign analysis, electability survey results, and party strategic reports
7	Changing Relationship Dynamics	The relationship between parties and candidate figures changes according to the political situation and election developments.	Direct observation during the campaign, daily news about shifting political alliances
8	The Influence of Foucault's Theoretical Framework on Power	Power relations are not only formal, but also through narrative and media mechanisms that shape public perception.	Discourse analysis in social media, political theory articles, and academic publications related to power theory
9	Image Strategy and Narrative Arrangement	Candidates and parties use the media to build a positive image through image campaigns.	Analysis of social media content, television campaign advertisements, and mass media reports
10	Makassar Regional Election Contest	There are intense negotiations between political parties and figures regarding strategy and the division of power.	Election results reports and investigative news from local media

**Table 1** shows that the practice of transactional relations in politics can be seen through the perspective of how political parties need figures who have popularity, influence, and the ability to mobilize the masses as one of the indicators of success in achieving public support and success in elections. On the other hand, candidate figures need political parties as a platform to convey their ideas, agendas, and policies to a wider audience. Political parties provide logistical support, organizational infrastructure, and political resources that are very much needed by figures to achieve political success. The phenomenon of transactional relations between political parties and figures only focuses on efforts to win political battles. Ideally, the relationship between political parties and figures focuses more on good management in the distribution of people's welfare, not just political interests to achieve power alone [14].

Interdependence in the context of this transactional relationship will create the risk of corruption or unethical political practices. If not

properly regulated, this transactional relationship can lead to collusion and nepotism, where personal or small group interests can replace the public interest. Therefore, interdependence between political parties and figures creates a dynamic in the political realm, where effective collaboration can have a positive impact on the development of democracy and public services, while lack of supervision can open the door to behavior that is detrimental to society. In general, transactional politics will harm the realization of democratic elections and have implications for the process of organizing the regional elections themselves which are less democratic.

The Makassar City regional head election contest was marked by intense negotiations between political parties and candidate figures regarding the division of power, determination of priority programs, and strategies to win public support. In some cases, candidate figures have significant influence on political party decisions, while political parties also play a role in shaping the image and political narrative

of candidate figures. Political support is a form of symbiotic interaction between political parties and candidate figures that involves the exchange of resources and political power. In the context of transactional relations, this relationship can be explained as a form of pragmatic agreement in which each party fulfills their political needs and goals. Political parties need candidate figures to gain legitimacy, mass support, and special expertise that can strengthen their political base. Conversely, candidate figures need organizational infrastructure and financial support owned by political parties to achieve their political goals.

Transactional relations in this context occur due to the exchange of political support, resources, and access to the voter base. Political parties provide various political support and platforms to candidate figures, while candidate figures use their personal qualities and political networks as instruments to benefit political parties. However, this relationship is dynamic and can change over time and with changes in political interests. Candidate figures and political parties support each other as long as their interests are aligned, but this relationship is vulnerable to political shifts, differences of opinion, or changes in personal interests. In this context, political support that occurs in transactional relations between political parties and figures is not only limited to rhetorical or symbolic support, but involves real exchanges that provide concrete benefits for both parties [15].

Transactional relations between political parties and figures in the Makassar city regional head election contestation, if examined through the framework of Michel Foucault's power relations theory, then the transactional relations between political parties and candidate figures are understood as a form of exchange or agreement involving common interests. Foucault emphasized that power is not an entity owned exclusively by the government or political parties, but rather a complex network involving various actors in society [16]. Foucault emphasized the importance of understanding power as a network spread across various levels of society. In this context, political parties and candidate figures in Makassar City are interrelated entities, forming transactional relations that include the exchange of interests, support, and resources. Political parties, as agents of formal power, utilize candidate figures to gain legitimacy and support from constituents.

Political parties, which have formal power structures, interact with candidate figures to achieve common goals. Transactions between the two involve the exchange of political support, resources, or information that can improve their position in the political sphere. In Foucault's framework, this

transactional relationship is not only limited to formal structures, but also highlights hidden or invisible power mechanisms. Political parties and candidate figures will influence each other through strategies that are not always visible on the surface, such as the use of media, narrative construction, or the arrangement of political discourse [17].

Transactional relations within Foucault's framework emphasize the importance of controlling information and narratives as tools for shaping public opinion. Political parties and candidate figures in Makassar are involved in the construction of narratives that lead to favorable image-building, creating a symbiotic relationship that strengthens each other's position. Additionally, Foucault's concept of biopower is also relevant here, referring to the use of power to regulate the lives of individuals. In the context of regional elections, political parties and candidate figures use their power to manage political life, design policies, and control available resources.

### **Exploitative and Dominant Relationship Between Political Parties and Figures Towards Constituents**

The reality of exploitative relationships between political parties or candidate figures and their constituents often manifests in various forms, such as using their positions or power to manipulate or exploit their constituents. In dominant relationships, political parties or candidate figures hold significant influence or power over their constituents. In this context, constituents are bound or dependent on the political party or candidate due to the lack of adequate political alternatives. The political power or popularity of the candidate figure forces constituents to comply or follow directives without much critical consideration. The exploitative and dominant relationships enacted by political parties and candidate figures often create an imbalance of power between them and their constituents. This leads to political injustice, inequality in resource distribution, and political dissatisfaction among the public. The dominant relationship between political parties and constituents results in abuse of power and political manipulation. Candidate figures with dominant control continually use their power to strengthen their party's position, even if it means sacrificing the interests of their constituents. [18].

Based on the observations during the local elections campaign in Makassar, several indications of exploitative and dominant relationships between candidates and constituents were found.

*"During campaign events in several districts, it was observed that candidates often used strategies such as direct aid or donations to specific community groups. For example, at one event, the candidate provided aid in the form of staple goods to attendees, particularly*

*those from low-income families. (Observation, 8/10/24)"*

The observation also recorded social pressure felt by the constituents.

*"At one meeting, some residents shared with the observation team that they felt compelled to attend because they feared they would not receive future social assistance if they did not show support. In addition, the candidate's use of mass media was notably dominant, with political advertisements shaping public opinion to support the candidate without leaving room for alternative political choices. (Observation, 8/10/24)"*

This indicates an attempt to control the political narrative by the candidate to strengthen their dominance, pointing to a dominant relationship that limits the constituents' freedom to choose. Although exploitative and dominant relationships between political parties and constituents, as well as between candidate figures and constituents, are common, the power dynamics may shift over time. This occurs when constituents begin to realize that their interests are being ignored or exploited by certain political parties or candidate figures, prompting them to seek alternative political options. However, if exploitative and dominant relationships persist, they may lead to political polarization and ideological conflicts.

The political polarization that arises will create new conflicts in the relationships between political parties, candidate figures, and constituents. When political parties and candidate figures seek to strengthen their own views and ideologies, constituents may feel forced to choose between extreme options. This can further strengthen dominant relationships, where political parties and candidate figures demand absolute loyalty from their constituents, leaving no space for differing opinions or negotiation [19].

The exploitative and dominant relations between political parties and candidate figures towards constituents in the context of regional head elections in Makassar City can be understood through the lens of Michel Foucault's power relations theory. Foucault views power as a network of relations that encompasses various areas of life, including politics. In regional head elections, political parties and candidate figures dominate and exploit constituents. Political parties and candidate figures use various strategies to gain power and maintain it, through control over political narratives and control over resources [20].

The exploitative and dominant relationship between political parties and candidate figures with constituents can also be seen through the prism of biopower and governmentality practices introduced

by Foucault. Biopower is an effort by the government or authority to regulate and control the population as a whole, both physically and politically [21]. In the context of local elections, political parties and candidate figures utilize various instruments of biopower to influence the behavior and perceptions of constituents. In this regard, political parties and candidate figures employ mass media to disseminate narratives that support their political agendas or organize political events designed to strengthen their political identity among constituents.

Meanwhile, the concept of governmentality refers to the ways in which individuals and groups are governed by various structures of power and knowledge within society. In the context of local elections, political parties and candidate figures use governmentality to govern their constituents, both through formal regulations such as electoral rules or political laws, and through informal mechanisms such as social norms or political culture instilled within society [21]. Both cases represent an illustration of the reality that occurs, where political parties and candidate figures leverage their power to shape and control the behavior and political views of their constituents. Political parties and candidate figures employ various methods such as surveillance, control of information, or the formation of public opinion to ensure that constituents remain loyal to them.

Political parties and candidate figures competing in regional elections tend to employ various strategies to control political narratives and manipulate the knowledge available in society. Political parties and candidate figures achieve this through the domination of mass media, the formation of favorable political narratives, or even control over education and other knowledge institutions [22]. Foucault argues that knowledge is not neutral but rather a product of power and political structures. In this context, political parties and candidate figures use knowledge as a tool to reinforce their dominance over constituents. They control access to information, censor or manipulate facts, or even create narratives that align with their political interests.

Through their control over knowledge and management of political discourse, political parties and candidate figures can strengthen their exploitative and dominant relationships with constituents in the context of regional elections in Makassar. Conceptually, an exploitative relationship refers to the utilization of political interests and resources by political parties and candidate figures without considering the true interests of the constituents. In the context of regional elections, this can occur through opaque campaign funding, unrealistic political promises, or the abuse of power in other forms.

Meanwhile, a dominant relationship refers to the domination or influence held by political parties or specific candidate figures over constituents. This dominance can be direct, such as intimidation or pressure on voters, or indirect, through control over economic resources or mass media.

### Symbolic Politics

Symbolic politics refers to the use of symbols, emblems, and rituals by actors or candidate figures to achieve their political goals. This concept emphasizes the importance of symbols in communicating political messages, building political identities, and influencing public perceptions of the government, political parties, or certain political movements. In this context, symbols such as flags, national emblems, national anthems, and ritual events have the power to trigger emotions, arouse solidarity, or communicate certain political messages to the public. The regional head elections in Makassar City displayed political dynamics that were rich in symbolism. In the context of symbolic politics, many elements were considered in an effort to build an image, represent values, and influence public perception. Symbolic politics in the regional head elections in Makassar City is a political process dominated by the use of symbols, emblems, and images to influence constituent perceptions and emotions. In this context, candidate figures use various symbolic strategies to build a positive image, communicate their political messages, and win constituent support.

Candidate figures competing in the regional head election contest in Makassar City tend to build their leadership image and achievements through the use of symbols that emphasize their past achievements or future visions. In addition, in an effort to expand their support base, candidate figures often use symbols that emphasize their commitment to representation and social justice. In the digital era like today, symbolic politics often occurs through the use of social and visual media. Candidate figures often use photos, videos, and graphics designed to attract attention, communicate messages, and build the desired image among constituents in building relationship patterns.

*“during the campaign event at Karebosi Field on July 18, 2024, the two competing candidates used Makassar cultural symbols to strengthen relations with local constituents. Candidate A wore traditional Makassar clothing and invited the traditional Gendang Makassar music group to perform. This step aims to highlight local identity and show the candidate's closeness to local culture. In contrast, Candidate B chose to use religious symbols in the campaign in Tamalate District by holding a joint prayer event and singing religious songs. This strategy shows how symbolic politics is used to create*

*emotional closeness with constituents based on cultural and religious identity. (Observation, 08/18/24).”*

The regional head elections in Makassar City recorded a number of events that showed strong symbolic politics. In this context, symbolic politics used by political parties and candidate figures, refers to the use of symbols, images, or non-verbal messages to influence public perception of competing candidates and political parties. One striking example is the use of cultural and religious symbols in political campaigns. To build a pattern of relations with constituents, candidate figures utilize local and traditional icons of Makassar, such as traditional clothing, dance, and music, to build a strong image among constituents [23].

Symbolic politics in the regional head election contest in Makassar City can also be seen in the use of colors and symbols of political parties. Candidate figures and political parties use colors that are traditionally associated with their political parties, as well as symbols that are easily recognized by constituents. This use aims to strengthen the party's identity and make it easier for constituents to identify their choices at the polling station. One example that occurs is the presence of candidates who build narratives about their experience and qualifications in the fields of government, infrastructure development, or financial management. They always highlight their achievements during their previous term or their vision to build the city of Makassar in a better direction by using the slogan " $2x + \sqrt{\quad}$ " which can be interpreted that when they are re-elected, they will make the city of Makassar better. The results of the observation show:

*“On social media, especially Instagram, it is seen that candidates use strong slogans and branding as part of a symbolic political strategy. Candidate A carries the slogan “Makassar Lebih Baik  $2x + \sqrt{\quad}$ ”, which implies an increase in quality if the candidate is re-elected. This slogan is combined with the use of dominant colors blue and red, which represent stability and courage. Candidate B, on the other hand, uses the slogan “Makassar Berkah dan Sejahtera”, with a dominant color green that represents a religious impression and prosperity. This shows that visual branding and the use of memorable slogans are strategic efforts to strengthen the candidate's image and communicate their political vision to the public (Observation, 8/08/24).”*

These narratives are not only intended to convince constituents of their capabilities as leaders, but also to attract sympathy and support from constituents. Symbolic politics that occur during the political battle process in the Makassar City regional elections are also seen in branding strategies and

campaign naming. Candidate figures and political parties use strong, memorable, and down-to-earth slogans to strengthen their campaign identity. These slogans are a reflection of the values they want to convey to constituents, such as honesty, loyalty, or justice and so on. Therefore, symbolic politics in the Makassar City regional head election contest is not only limited to the use of visual symbols or political narratives, but also includes the use of social media, branding strategies, and campaign naming.

The results of the observations show that:

*“At a campaign event in Panakkukang District on August 15, 2024, one of the candidates invited prominent religious figures to lead prayers before the event began. In addition, the candidate used religious symbols, such as installing flags inscribed with verses from the Qur'an around the campaign stage. The use of these religious symbols indicates a symbolic political strategy aimed at attracting the sympathy of constituents from religious communities. This approach has proven effective in creating an emotional campaign atmosphere and strengthening the candidate's image as a religious figure committed to religious values (Observation, 8/08/24).”*

This shows that symbolic politics has become an integral part of modern political strategy in building patterns of relations with constituents, where candidate figures and political parties are smart in utilizing various tools and techniques to influence public perception and support [24].

One important aspect of symbolic politics is how these symbols can inspire or mobilize the masses. Through the use of inspiring symbols, candidate figures and political parties will strengthen social movements or mobilize the community to change conditions that are considered unfair or unsatisfactory. All the dynamics that occur in the context of symbolic politics, slowly have the potential to cause conflict or polarization in society. The use of controversial symbols or those that belittle certain groups will trigger negative reactions and deepen the divisions between groups. Therefore, candidate figures and political parties, ideally choose symbols wisely and consider their impact on the diversity and unity of society, nation and state [25]. Observations also note the potential for polarization in society as an effect of this symbolic politics.

*“The use of symbols that focus on certain cultural and religious identities has caused debate on social media, especially on platforms such as Twitter. Several posts show residents who feel unrepresented by certain candidates because of the use of symbols that are considered exclusive and not inclusive of all*

*Makassar residents. For example, some community groups view Candidate A's use of traditional Makassar clothing as an exclusive effort that does not reflect the cultural diversity of the multi-ethnic city of Makassar (Observation, 8/08/24).”*

Symbolic politics in the context of regional head elections in Makassar City can be understood through the interpretation and reception of symbols by the community. Although candidate figures and political parties design symbolic messages with certain goals, the way the community understands and responds to these symbols will also affect the election results. Symbolic politics is not only an effort by politicians to influence voters, but also a dynamic process that involves interaction between political actors and the community. Symbolic politics in the context of regional head elections in Makassar City is not only a strategy used by political parties and candidate figures to build a pattern of relations with constituents, but is a reflection of complex social, cultural, and political dynamics.

### **Money as a Tool of Political Relations**

Money plays a role in influencing political dynamics. In this context, money is not only a means of transaction, but also an instrument used to build political relations, gain support, and influence election results. Regional head candidates often invest large sums of money in building political alliances with political parties, community leaders, religious leaders, and other interest groups.

*“Money is used to fund various campaign activities, including media advertising, billboards, and political events to attract voter support. In addition, money is also used to build alliances with local political figures, political parties, and other interest groups that have influence in the election (Observation 8/23/24).”*

Through financial assistance, candidate figures can persuade individuals and groups to support their political vision and agenda [26]. Money has become one of the main factors in influencing political dynamics in Makassar City. It is undeniable that money is a very strong political relation tool in the regional head elections in Makassar City. The regional head candidate figures and their supporting teams use money for various purposes, ranging from political campaigns to unethical political practices such as bribery and gratification (Money politics). Large amounts of money are used to finance political campaigns, buying support, and other political practices aimed at winning certain candidates [7].

*“The use of money in the practice of "money politics" such as giving cash, gratification, and other forms is also observed in political contestation in Makassar. This kind of practice causes distortion of democracy*

*and inequality in opportunities for candidates who do not have large financial access (Observation, 8/23/24)."*

In the regional head election contest in Makassar City, money is not only used as a tool to win voters' votes, but also as an instrument to strengthen political relations between candidate figures and various parties who have political and economic interests in Makassar City. Regional head candidate figures use money to build strong political networks, gain support from local political figures, gain access to important political resources and infrastructure, and expand their electoral base.

The use of money in the context of regional head elections in Makassar City, presents a number of negative impacts. Political practices driven by the use of money as a means of relations, lead to the emergence of practices of abuse of power, and distortion of democracy. In addition, the excessive use of money in political campaigns, indirectly creates inequality and inequity in the political process, where candidate figures who have greater financial access tend to dominate the political stage, while candidates who are less financially able are marginalized [7]. The results of the observations show:

*"Excessive use of money in political campaigns causes inequality in political access. Candidates with greater financial resources have an advantage in expanding their support base and building political networks, while candidates who are less financially able are marginalized. This also leads to the emergence of practices of abuse of power (Observation, 8/23/24)."*

Through the lens of Michel Foucault's power relations theory, it shows how money is not only a tool for economic transactions, but also an instrument of complex and ever-changing political domination. The election of regional heads in Makassar City is a concrete example of how money plays a role in shaping political relations that influence the dynamics of power at the regional level, in accordance with the principles championed by Michel Foucault.[21]. The use of money in the context of the Makassar City regional head election illustrates a form of power manifested in economic form. Elections are often a stage where economic power plays a major role in determining the political direction of a region. In this case, candidate figures with access to strong financial resources tend to have an advantage in building political support networks, conducting effective campaigns, and even influencing public opinion through media coverage [27]. The results of the observation show:

*"The use of money in the regional head elections in Makassar shows how power manifested in economic form influences political relations between candidates, political parties, local elites, and interest groups. The political relations formed are not only vertical between the rulers and the ruled, but also horizontal between various political actors who depend on each other to obtain or maintain power (Observation, 8/23/24)."*

Money is also a tool to build and strengthen political relations between candidates and various political actors in the regional head election contest in Makassar City, such as political parties, local elites, or interest groups. In Foucault's view, these kinds of relationships are not only vertical between the rulers and the ruled, but also horizontal between various political actors who compete and collaborate to gain or maintain power [28]. The use of money also forms political dependency between various actors, be it constituents, political parties, or other elites. In the context of the Makassar regional head election, candidate figures who have sufficient financial resources can provide rewards or support to certain groups in society as a form of political exchange. This creates complex relationships between various political actors, who depend on each other in achieving their political goals.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study reveals the pattern of relations between political parties, figures, and constituents in the Makassar City regional head election contestation. The results of the study indicate that the relationship between political parties and political figures is transactional, where material interests and power are the main binders. This relationship often exploits and dominates constituents, prioritizing symbolic politics and the use of money as the main tool in building relationships. This phenomenon reflects a strong dependence on materialistic aspects in political dynamics at the regional level.

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#### Author declaration

#### Author contributions and responsibilities

The authors made major contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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#### Availability of data and materials

All data is available from the author.

#### Competing interests



The authors declare no competing interests.

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