

Political Communication Brokerage and Election Law Compliance: The Role of Socio-Religious Values and Environmental Ethics in Tambak Lorok

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of political brokers in communication practices in the Tambak Lorok fishing community in Semarang City, Central Java, focusing on compliance with election laws and the politicization of environmental issues. The community experiences multiple vulnerabilities, ranging from socio-ecological crises affecting socio-economic life to political mobilization practices that turn voting into an electoral commodity. Data were collected using a case study approach, specifically through in-depth interviews

with 10 informants, including five brokers and five community members, as well as an analysis of secondary document sources. The results showed that three types of brokers, namely activists, clientelists, and opportunists, operated simultaneously, exploiting environmental issues, including tidal flooding, diesel fuel shortages, and coastal waste as political narratives. These narratives were used to build candidate legitimacy and mobilize votes based on promises of ecological solutions, often combined with the practice of money politics. Political brokers were not only agents of patronage but also communication actors who framed local issues in electoral political discourse. In practice, political brokers occupied a biased position by engaging in legitimate political communication and violating Law Number 7 of 2017. A central finding of this study is the systematic weaponization of Islamic jurisprudential concepts—specifically the intentional conflation of *risywah* (bribery) with *shadaqah* (alms) and *hadijah* (gifts)—within communal *pengajian* spaces to neutralize legal resistance to vote-buying. It constitutes a paradigmatic case of interfaith legal tension, where Islamic normative frameworks are inverted to subvert state electoral law. In conclusion, this study contributes to strengthening the understanding of informal actors, electoral law, and the quality of democracy, specifically at the local level, while expanding the discourse on how environmental issues are politicized in the context of urban coastal communities in developing countries.

KEYWORDS *political brokers, political communication, compliance with election laws, coastal community, interfaith law.*

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Introduction

This study examines the role of political brokers and the communication practices in the Tambak Lorok fishing community during the general election. Tambak Lorok fishing community in Semarang City, Central Java, offers a compelling case because it simultaneously faces environmental problems that directly affect residents' socio-economic life, and also serves as a political base whose votes are often mobilized in every election. In Indonesia, elections are not only a procedural mechanism of democracy, creating substantial justice¹ and fulfilling the constitutional rights of citizens, but also an arena for communication between political actors and voters². In this context, the existence of brokers is crucial, particularly in developing countries where politicians often rely on them to mobilize support and votes^{3,4}. This implies that election candidates use political brokers to gain trust and respect in the community⁵.

¹ Muzakkir Zakaria, "Legal Aspects of Election Administration Decisions Stages of Vote Counting Recapitulation in Pidie Jaya Regency," *Al Mashaadir: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 5, no. 2 (2024): 57–70, <https://doi.org/10.52029/jis.v5i2.192>.

² Agnieszka Turska-Kawa and Waldemar Wojtasik, "'Directiveness' As a Predictor of Religious Attitudes," *Polish Sociological Review* 198, no. 2 (2017): 189–201.

³ LAURA SCHECHTER and UW Madison, *BROKERING VOTES WITH INFORMATION SPREAD VIA SOCIAL NETWORKS*, 45, no. July 2009 (2002): 637–92.

⁴ HORACIO LARREGUY et al., "Parties, Brokers, and Voter Mobilization: How Turnout Buying Depends Upon the Party's Capacity to Monitor Brokers," *American Political Science Review* 110, no. 1 (2016): 160–79.

⁵ Tesalia Rizzo, "Motivated Brokers," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2015, 1–39, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2619843>.

Studies on political brokers typically focus on the role in vote buying^{6,7,8} and the distribution of patronage^{9,10,11,12}. In the context of political communication, political brokers play a key role in shaping a candidate's positive image through clear, consistent, and relevant campaign messages¹³. Numerous studies have explored the role of political brokers, but limited attention has been paid to their character as actors in political communication, shaping public discourse. Investigations on compliance in elections generally focus on formal institutions, including the General Elections Commission (KPU) and Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), as well as state officials^{14,15} thereby rarely addressing the contribution of informal actors in strengthening or weakening legal compliance. Meanwhile, environmental issues in local politics are often studied in the

⁶ Initiative for Democracy & Civic Empowerment, "Buying a Ballot: Vote Brokers in Southeast Asia."

⁷ SCHECHTER and Madison, *BROKERING VOTES WITH INFORMATION SPREAD VIA SOCIAL NETWORKS*.

⁸ Edward Aspinall et al., "Vote Buying in Indonesia: Candidate Strategies, Market Logic and Effectiveness," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 17, no. 1 (2017): 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jea.2016.31>.

⁹ Edward Aspinall and Muhammad Uhaib As'Ad, *The Patronage Patchwork: Village Brokerage Networks and the Power of the State in an Indonesian Election*, in *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde*, vol. 171, nos. 2–3 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17102004>.

¹⁰ Sarah Nuraini Siregar, "Patronage Democracy in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities* 10, no. 1 (2020): 71–74, <https://doi.org/10.14203/jissh.v10i1.158>.

¹¹ Iskandar Iskandar and Kamrin Kamrin, "Posisi Broker Dalam Ikatan Patronase Sebagai Wujud Kelas Menengah Komunitas Petani Di Pedesaan Sulawesi Selatan," *Jurnal Sosiologi Kontemporer* 2, no. 2 (2022): 70–77, <https://doi.org/10.56326/jsk.v2i2.2161>.

¹² Prince Aian G. Villanueva and Jessa Nicole P. Salazar, "Patronage Politics and Clientelism in Housing Welfare: The Case of Gawad Kalinga (GK) Villages in Parañaque City, The Philippines," *Journal Of Government and Politics* 6, no. 2 (2015): 170–85, <https://doi.org/10.18196/jgp.2015.0013>.

¹³ Zidnal Falah, "Peran Komunikasi Politik Dalam Membentuk Citra Kandidat Pemilu," *JOURNAL SYNTAX IDEA* 5, no. February (2024): 4–6.

¹⁴ Randi Aritama, "Tanggung Jawab Hukum KPU Dalam Pelanggaran Pemilu: Studi Berdasarkan UU No. 7 Tahun 2017," *Jurnal Thengkyang* 8, no. 7 (2023): 48–55.

¹⁵ Harris Y. P. Sibuea, *Effectiveness of Bawaslu 'S Legal Authority on Election Crime*, XVI, no. 3 (2024).

framework of policymaking^{16,17} or conflicts of interest in development^{18,19}. Few studies have examined how these issues are politicized through intermediaries, such as grassroots-level brokers. Therefore, there is a gap in studies that simultaneously connect three dimensions: the role of political brokers, compliance with election law, and the politicization of environmental issues, particularly in the context of a socio-economically vulnerable urban fishing community, such as Tambak Lorok.

This study is important because the role of political brokers in elections is often viewed as merely that of agents who distribute money or patronage. Meanwhile, the role of political communication actors shaping public discourse remains under-recognized. In the coastal community of Tambak Lorok, brokers not only liaise between candidates and the public but also use environmental issues, including tidal flooding, land subsidence, diesel fuel shortages, and waste problems, as effective political narratives to influence voter behavior. On the other hand, aspects of election law compliance are still dominated by discussions about formal institutions (the General Elections Commission (KPU), Bawaslu (Elections Supervisory Agency), or law enforcement officials), voter dynamics, and voter turnout levels,²⁰ leaving the contribution of informal actors such as brokers in upholding or even weakening the principle of free and fair elections relatively neglected. This study urgently addresses the academic gap regarding the relationship among brokers, environmental issues, and election law compliance. It broadens the scope by adding the dimension of election law, where brokers serve not only as liaisons between candidates and voters but also as actors who can enforce or undermine compliance with it. The perspective provides a new

¹⁶ Antony Millner and Hélène Ollivier, "Beliefs, Politics, and Environmental Policy," *Review of Environmental Economics and Policy* 10, no. 2 (2016): 226–44, <https://doi.org/10.1093/reep/rew010>.

¹⁷ Neil Carter, "The Environment as a Policy Problem," in *The Politics of the Environment: Ideas, Activism, Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511819179.012>.

¹⁸ Arnim Scheidel et al., "Environmental Conflicts and Defenders: A Global Overview," *Global Environmental Change* 63, no. January (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2020.102104>.

¹⁹ Florian Pethig and Julia Kroenung, "Specialized Information Systems for the Digitally Disadvantaged," *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, ahead of print, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.17705/1jais.00573>.

²⁰ Ismaidar Ismaidar et al., "Analysis of Legal Political Dynamics in the Regulation of Simultaneous Regional Elections in Indonesia: Between Effectiveness and Local Democracy," *International Journal of Law and Society* 2, no. 1 (2024): 64–82, <https://doi.org/10.62951/ijls.v2i1.288>.

contribution to comparative political studies on the relationship between informal actors, law, and the quality of democracy.

Furthermore, this study argues that political brokerage is not merely a secular transaction but is deeply embedded in the community's social and religious fabric. By examining the pivotal role of religious gatherings like *pengajian*, this research explores how local moral values and informal social structures fundamentally shape the community's perception of election law and statutory compliance.²¹ This inquiry directly aligns with contemporary public policy discourse, where the integration of religious ethics and legal principles is increasingly recognized as a vital framework for addressing multifaceted societal challenges, including social justice and environmental sustainability.²² By unmasking these localized dynamics, this study directly intersects with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). First, by demonstrating how grassroots brokers weaponize severe tidal flooding and land subsidence, this research addresses the socio-political vulnerabilities of coastal populations, aligning with SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 14 (Life Below Water). Second, by exposing the manipulation of female-dominated religious circles for transactional vote mobilization, it contributes to critical discourses on SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and on protecting women's civic spaces from predatory clientelism. Finally, through a rigorous doctrinal analysis of the legislative enforcement gaps within Law No. 7 of 2017, this paper advances SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by proposing legal and community-based frameworks to enhance regulatory compliance and promote robust democratic governance.

Critically, this study positions itself at the nexus of interfaith law and society by examining how Islamic legal norms interact with, and are systematically subverted by, secular statutory frameworks in the context of electoral politics. The concept of interfaith law, understood as the engagement between state positive law and religiously grounded normative systems, is central to the analytical contribution of this paper. Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy, serves as a unique laboratory where Islamic jurisprudence

²¹ Muhammad Azam, Abdullah Abdul-Majeed Hamdoun, Eid Abed Alhaleem Maslat Harahsheh, Anis Mashdurohatun, and Hamonangan Parsaulian Sidaauruk, "Religious Diversity in the Digital Economy: Interfaith Legal Pathways to Harmonize Sharia, Christian Ethics, and International Law," *Contemporary Issues on Interfaith Law and Society* 4, no. 2 (2025): 207–264, <https://doi.org/10.15294/ciils.v4i2.33011>.

²² Rifki Fakihudin, "Formulation of Public Policy Based on Islamic Legal Studies as a Solution in the Contemporary Era," *Contemporary Issues on Interfaith Law and Society* 2, no. 2 (2023): 145–66, <https://doi.org/10.15294/CIILS.V2I2.68868>.

(*Fiqh*) and state election law do not operate in isolation but engage in continuous, contested dialogue at the grassroots level. Political brokers in Tambak Lorok exploit precisely this dialogic space, weaponizing Islamic moral-legal concepts—most notably the definitional boundaries between *risywah* (bribery), *hadijah* (gifts), and *shadaqah* (alms)—to undermine the enforcement of secular electoral prohibitions. It constitutes a paradigmatic case of interfaith legal tension, where religious norms are not merely complementary to state law but are actively deployed as instruments to neutralize it. The study therefore makes a direct contribution to the scholarship of Contemporary Issues on Interfaith Law and Society by demonstrating how the conceptual apparatus of Islamic jurisprudence becomes a terrain of contestation in electoral governance, and by proposing institutional remedies that harness interfaith normative frameworks to reinforce, rather than undermine, democratic legal order.

Method

This study used a case study approach²³ to investigate the role of brokers in political communication, specifically examining the intersection of election law compliance, socio-religious values, and the politicization of environmental issues within the fishing community of Tambak Lorok Village, Semarang. Primary data collection was conducted from January to March 2025 through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and detailed field notes involving 10 purposively selected informants. This research cohort comprised five political brokers and five active members of the local fishing community. Informants were recruited using a snowball sampling technique based on specific criteria: active participation in recent electoral cycles and direct engagement with or exposure to localized environmental crises. To protect participant vulnerabilities, all stages of this study strictly adhered to the ethical principles of social research, guaranteeing rigorous informed consent, absolute anonymity, and data confidentiality.

To ensure academic rigor and systematically address the specialized socio-legal and religious-ethical dimensions of the inquiry, the semi-structured interview guide was operationalized into three interconnected theoretical clusters rather than relying on abstract formulations.²⁴ The first cluster examined the

²³ Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 5th ed. (Sage Publications, 2009).

²⁴ Dede Indraswara, "Rekonstruksi

dologis Hukum: Diversifikasi dan Integrasi Penelitian Hukum Normatif (Doktrinal), Empiris (Non-Doktrinal), dan Studi Sosio-Legal (Legal Methodological Reconstruction: Diversification and Integration of Normative (Doctrinal), Empirical (Non-Doctrinal), and

socio-religious boundary node, deeply exploring the informants' shifting perceptions regarding the moral and conceptual limits between religious alms (*shadaqah*) or legitimate gifts (*hadiiah*) and systemic vote-buying or political bribery (*risywah*). It was directly integrated with the second cluster, which scrutinized the theological reasoning of ecological suffering by evaluating how severe local environmental crises, including tidal flooding, land subsidence, and coastal waste, are interpreted through a religious lens—specifically focusing on whether these issues are viewed as structural state negligence or rationalized as divine trials. Finally, the third cluster investigated the political exploitation of domestic religious spaces, tracing how informal communal gatherings, specifically *pengajian* (religious communal prayers), are functionalized by brokers as highly persuasive channels for informal political communication, material resource distribution, and candidate framing.

TABLE 1. Identity of Informants

No	Informant	Age	Gender	Status
1.	I1	52 years	Female	Broker
2.	I2	65 years	Male	Broker
3.	I3	50 years	Male	Broker
4.	I4	55 years	Male	Broker
5.	I5	60 years	Male	Broker
6.	I6	30 years	Male	Fishing Community
7.	I7	25 years	Male	Fishing Community
8.	I8	40 years	Male	Fishing Community
9.	I9	46 years	Female	Fishing Community
10.	I10	56 years	Female	Fishing Community

To provide a comprehensive context, secondary data comprising relevant statutory documents, election reports, and ecological assessments were compiled to enrich the study's structural baseline. Data validity and credibility were strictly maintained through the triangulation of both sources and methods, supplemented by post-interview member checking and peer discussions. The analytical process was executed iteratively using thematic analysis based on the Miles and Huberman framework, which proceeded through continuous stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

Result & Discussion

A. Brokers and general description of the coastal community of Tambak Lorok, Semarang

Tambak Lorok Village, located in Tanjungmas Village, North Semarang District, is known as the largest fishing village in Semarang City. This area lies along the Java Sea coastline and at the mouth of the Banger River. It covers approximately 84.48 hectares and is divided into two regions, namely Tambak Mulyo in the west and Tambak Rejo in the east. The strategic location on the coast significantly impacts the local community lifestyle, particularly in economic and social aspects.

Significant challenges have been reported in Tambak Lorok Village across various dimensions of life, including environmental issues, health concerns, low educational levels, and poverty. These environmental issues include land subsidence, seawater intrusion, and waste accumulation, which have left many fishermen's homes submerged and roads flooded, ultimately damaging the coastal community's settlements and disrupting economic well-being. In terms of public health, the majority of the community lacks adequate basic facilities for bathing, washing, and defecating, leading to various diseases.

Fishing is the primary livelihood, and diesel fuel is the primary source of energy. However, the current limited availability of diesel fuel has made sea travel increasingly expensive, affecting the frequency of fishing trips. This situation has led to declining fish catches and reduced daily incomes, further worsening the economic vulnerability of fishing families. All of the social problems experienced by the community have led to hope in the presence of the state, one of which is through general elections and the role of political brokers. The community generally believes that political brokers have access to centers of power²⁵.

The term "political broker" was first coined by Edward Aspinall. Political brokers can be categorized into three main types, namely activist, clientelist, and opportunist²⁶. Activist brokers typically have a strong background in social or political organizations, are ideologically engaged, and maintain long-term relationships with the community, even beyond election periods. In contrast, clientelist brokers rely more on direct exchange mechanisms, where political

²⁵ Dimitrios Christopoulou and Karin Ingoldb, "Distinguishing between Political Brokerage & Political Entrepreneurship," *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 10 (2011): 36–42.

²⁶ Allen Hicken et al., *Buying Brokers Electoral Handouts beyond Clientelism in a Weak-Party State*, in *World Politics*, vol. 74, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887121000216>.

support is obtained through the distribution of aid or material rewards to citizens. Opportunist brokers tend to shift support between candidates or parties, exploiting political opportunities, and often prioritize personal interests over ideological commitments.

Reports have shown that these three types of brokers can be found in the same region, each playing a role based on their character, networks, and resources. Activist brokers in this region, for example, stand out through consistent participation in fishermen organizations or community forums, gaining moral legitimacy to influence political choices. Clientelist brokers use aid distribution networks such as necessities, cash, or community facilities to cement voter loyalty. Meanwhile, opportunistic brokers are characterized by flexible support patterns that adapt to the evolving political power landscape leading up to and during the campaign period. This phenomenon is consistent with Berenschot's analysis, stating that flexible support brokers often serve as a strategy to maximize political advantage in the context of intense electoral competition²⁷.

Clientelism has evolved from a mere exchange of material goods to a more complex form in which promises to address structural issues, such as the ecological crisis, are integrated into transactional relationships. It indicates that clientelism in Tambak Lorok operates not only at the microeconomic level but also touches on the collective needs of the coastal community. From a political brokerage perspective, this practice expands brokers' legitimacy, broadening perceptions beyond aid providers to include intermediaries who bring environmental issues into the electoral arena. At the same time, this strategy risks reducing environmental issues to political commodities whose value depends on the election cycle. Therefore, clientelism at the grassroots level appears dynamic and adaptive, adapting to the concrete problems faced by the community.

Political brokers are crucial links that ensure the smooth flow of resources and support amidst the complexities of the local political arena²⁸. These individuals typically come from diverse backgrounds, including farming, labor,

²⁷ Ward Berenschot, "The Political Economy of Clientelism: A Comparative Study of Indonesia's Patronage Democracy," *Comparative Political Studies* 51, no. 12 (2018): 1563–93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414018758756>;WGROUP:STRING:PUBLICATION.

²⁸ Novie Revlie Pioh et al., "Political Brokers in Head of Village Elections (A Case Study in Sangal Village and Rantau Bangkiang Village, Central Kalimantan Province, Indonesia)," *Journal of Governance and Public Policy* 11, no. 2 (2024): 212–22, <https://doi.org/10.18196/jgpp.v11i2.19783>.

and entrepreneurship²⁹. Candidates recruit political brokers to influence voters in exchange for money or goods. The primary motives are economic needs and the desire to gain financial benefits from the electoral process³⁰. It is in line with a previous study, which showed that political brokers generally obtain funds for personal interests, operational needs, and voter distribution³¹.

The presence of all three types of brokers simultaneously in Tambak Lorok is consistent with the Aspinall framework³². Aspinall emphasized that brokers employ different strategies based on their social backgrounds, networks, and motivations. This result was further reinforced by Berenschot, who explained that the flexibility of broker support is an adaptive strategy in a competitive local political context³³. In the case of Tambak Lorok, the presence of all three types demonstrates the unique dynamics of a coastal community that uses environmental issues to bolster its political legitimacy. It is consistent with the assertion that political brokers frequently exploit and empower marginalized communities³⁴.

Opportunistic brokers who shift support between candidates present a problematic aspect from an election law perspective³⁵. Election law enforcement in Indonesia is often hindered at the grassroots level, as the participation of

²⁹ David W. Archer et al., "Social and Political Influences on Agricultural Systems," *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 23, no. 4 (2008): 272–84, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S174217050700169X>.

³⁰ Hector Bahamonde and Andrea Canales, "Electoral Risk and Vote Buying, Introducing Prospect Theory to the Experimental Study of Clientelism," *Electoral Studies* 80, no. July (2022): 102497, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2022.102497>.

³¹ Mohammad Hidayatullah et al., "Political Broker Giving Money and Intimidating in Regional Head Elections in Indonesia," *Jurnal Studi Sosial Dan Politik* 5, no. 8.5.2017 (2022): 2003–5.

³² Aspinall et al., "Vote Buying in Indonesia: Candidate Strategies, Market Logic and Effectiveness."

³³ Nabila Azzahra et al., "Klientelisme Dalam Pemilihan Kepala Desa Di Desa Purwadadi Kabupaten Ciamis," *Journal of Political Issues* 7, no. 1 (2025): 71–86, <https://doi.org/10.33019/jpi.v7i1.321>.

³⁴ Sara de Jong et al., "Agents of Order? Brokerage and Empowerment in Development and Conflict," *Journal of International Development* 35, no. 3 (2023): 385–400, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3759>.

³⁵ Bohyeon Kang and Rupinder P. Jindal, "Opportunism in Buyer-Seller Relationships: Some Unexplored Antecedents," *Journal of Business Research* 68, no. 3 (2015): 735–42, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.07.009>.

informal actors is rarely accommodated in formal regulations³⁶. Therefore, brokers are not only agents of patronage but also play a role that can strengthen or weaken the principle of free, fair, and just elections as stipulated in the Election Law. In line with Berenschot, the existence of brokers does open up political access for the community. Without clear regulations, political brokers can blur the lines between legitimate political communication and illegal practices³⁷.

B. The Commodification of Pengajian Spaces: Conceptual Distortion of Risywah, Hadiah, and Shadaqah

The practices of political brokers in Tambak Lorok do not rely solely on secular, material transactions; rather, they have systematically extended into the realm of linguistic weaponization, exploiting Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) to legitimize vote-buying. Within highly personal, domestic religious spaces like *pengajian* (communal religious gatherings), brokers deliberately obfuscate moral-theological boundaries. When distributing material incentives—such as the standard IDR 150,000 cash handouts or staple food packages to fisherman housewives—brokers carefully avoid terms associated with “political money” or “bribes.” Instead, they rhetorically reframe these electoral commodities in noble religious terms, defining the distributions as *shadaqah* (alms) intended to alleviate the socio-economic burdens of tidal flooding, or as *hadiah* (gifts) signifying a candidate’s compassionate solidarity (*tali asih*).

This euphemistic strategy serves as a highly potent tool for subverting civic consciousness. In classical Islamic jurisprudence, both *shadaqah* and *hadiah* are classified as highly encouraged acts (*sunnah*) that bestow spiritual rewards upon both the giver and the receiver. By adopting this sacred lexicon, brokers construct a formidable moral shield that neutralizes the psychological guilt and ethical hesitation voters might otherwise feel, transforming an illicit electoral transaction into a culturally praised act of mutual aid (*ta’awun*) amidst an ongoing ecological crisis.

³⁶ “Thuggery And Local Politics in Indonesia: A Legal Political Analysis of The Involvement of Individuals in Power,” *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research* 08, no. 06 (2025): 4637–42, <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v8-i6-68>.

³⁷ Berenschot, “The Political Economy of Clientelism: A Comparative Study of Indonesia’s Patronage Democracy.”

This tactical reframing is clearly reflected in the testimony of one community member, who recalled how these distributions are domesticanya introduced:

"When the brokers come to the women's pengajian, they never say 'this is money from the candidate to buy your vote.' Instead, they open the meeting by making du'a (prayer) for our flooded houses, and then they hand out the envelope or rice package, saying, 'This is shadaqah from the candidate to help ease your burden from the tidal floods. Please accept this gift (tali asih) and remember his kindness on election day.'" (Interview with Informant 9, March 7, 2025).

However, when analyzed through the lens of contemporary socio-legal Islamic jurisprudence, this framing reveals a profound and manipulative conceptual distortion. Substantively, the material incentives distributed by brokers during election cycles meet all the structural criteria of *risywah* (bribery)—defined in Islamic law as the provision of material goods to a third party with the explicit intention of influencing a decision, altering an entitlement, or securing an asymmetric political advantage³⁸³⁹. The fundamental line separating *hadiah* or *shadaqah* from *risywah* lies in the structural causality (*illat*) of the transaction and its ultimate impact on public justice. Genuine alms are given purely out of spiritual devotion without expecting earthly compensation, while legitimate gifts seek to foster communal bonds without binding the recipient's civil rights.

The moment a material transfer is contingent upon a political communication message—whether explicit or implicit—to vote for a specific candidate, its status as charity is legally nullified, shifting entirely into the category of *risywah*. Under Islamic law, *risywah* is strictly prohibited (*haram*) because it corrupts the foundations of social justice. Political brokers in Tambak Lorok systematically exploit the community's limited legal and jurisprudential literacy, using the cultural elasticity of charity to soften resistance to vote-buying. Consequently, this commodification of *pengajian* spaces not only degrades the sanctity of local religious institutions but also paralyzes the efficacy of secular election laws. Religious norms, which ought to serve as a fortress of democratic

³⁸ Asliani Asliani, "Acts of Bribery in Corruption Cases Maqoshid Syariah Perspective," *Proceeding International Seminar of Islamic Studies*, March 30, 2026, 1093–99, <https://doi.org/10.3059/insis.v0i0.29415>.

³⁹ Irmayadi Sastra, "Risywah in the Perspective of Islamic and Positive Law," *Tradition and Modernity of Humanity* 4, no. 3 (2024): 72–77, <https://doi.org/10.32734/tmh.v4i3.17289>.

integrity, are twisted into an instrument of moral absolution for statutory violations.

From the perspective of interfaith law, the above dynamics represent a paradigmatic case of normative conflict between two legal orders: the secular positive law of the Indonesian state and the religious-ethical framework of Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh Muamalah*). Classical Islamic legal scholars, including Ibn Qudamah in *al-Mughni* and al-Nawawi in *al-Majmu'*, consistently established that the prohibition of *risywah* extends not only to the direct giver (*rasyi*) and the recipient (*murtasyi*), but also to the intermediary (*raish*)—a tripartite prohibition directly relevant to the broker's role in Tambak Lorok. In Islamic jurisprudence, a political broker who knowingly facilitates the transfer of electoral incentives under the guise of *shadaqah* is guilty of *raish*—a sin as grave as that of both the bribe-giver (the candidate) and the bribe-receiver (the voter). This jurisprudential framework carries immense practical significance: if community religious leaders (*kiai* or *ustadz*) were to disseminate this authentic jurisprudential ruling within *pengajian* gatherings actively, the community's acceptance of vote-buying disguised as charity would encounter a robust religious counter-narrative within its own normative framework. This interfaith legal analysis demonstrates that Islamic jurisprudence, when applied authentically and independently of broker manipulation, is not an obstacle to electoral integrity but a potential instrument for reinforcing it. The subversion of *Fiqh* by political brokers, therefore, constitutes a double violation: a breach of the state's positive law under Article 523 of Law No. 7 of 2017, and simultaneously a transgression of Islamic law's categorical prohibition of *risywah*. This dual violation, operating simultaneously across two normative systems, is the central finding of this paper's interfaith legal analysis.

C. Statutory Loopholes in Law No. 7 of 2017 and the Legal Immunity of Unregistered Brokers

The systemic pervasiveness of vote-buying in Tambak Lorok is heavily sustained by profound structural weaknesses within Indonesia's positive legal framework, specifically regarding the doctrinal limitations of Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections. When evaluating why the Election Supervisory Agency (*Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum* or Bawaslu) consistently fails to penalize grassroots intermediaries in coastal communities, a doctrinal examination of Article 523 of the Election Law reveals an acute enforcement loophole. Under

the strict statutory definitions of Indonesian electoral criminal law, punitive liability for monetary offenses during campaign periods is tightly bound to formal legal subjects.

The law explicitly stipulates that criminal sanctions for money politics can be applied only to individuals who are formally registered as candidates, political party participants, or official members of a campaign team (*pelaksana, peserta, dan/atau tim kampanye resmi*) documented by the General Elections Commission (KPU). Consequently, the informal brokers operating within Tambak Lorok—who function as organic community figures, local activists, or *pengajian* organizers—exist entirely outside this limitative statutory taxonomy. By deliberately maintaining their unregistered status, these informal actors establish a highly effective shield of legal immunity, rendering Bawaslu's enforcement mechanism virtually paralyzed at the grassroots level^{40,41}.

This tactical exploitation of the statutory loophole is explicitly manifested in the field practices of the brokers, who operate with full awareness of their structural invulnerability. One of the active brokers interviewed directly acknowledged how this formalistic legal gap acts as an operational shield on the ground:

"We are not registered anywhere in the KPU or the official candidate list. We are just residents helping our neighbors. Bawaslu or the local field inspectors (Panwaslu) cannot arrest us because we do not carry any official campaign badges or candidate decrees (SK). If they question us, we say this is an independent communal social activity. The candidate's formal team stays safe behind the desks, and we handle the distributions because the law cannot touch us." (Interview with Informant 2, March 3, 2025).

From a socio-legal perspective, this reality confirms that the architecture of Indonesian election law suffers from a fundamental mismatch between its formalistic assumptions and the adaptive networks of transactional clientelism⁴². While regulatory oversight assumes that electoral corruption flows exclusively

⁴⁰ Randi Aritama, "Tanggung Jawab Hukum KPU Dalam Pelanggaran Pemilu: Studi Berdasarkan UU No. 7 Tahun 2017," *Jurnal Thengkyang* 8, no. 1 (2023): 48–55.

⁴¹ A. Ikram Fadhil Mubarak Al-Jufri et al., "Efektivitas Penegakan Hukum Pidana Pemilu Legislatif 2024 di Gorontalo," *Jurisprudentie: Jurusan Ilmu Hukum Fakultas Syariah dan Hukum* 13, no. 1 (2026): 28–41, <https://doi.org/10.24252/jurisprudentie.v13i1.67739>.

⁴² Edward Aspinall and Ward Berenschot, *Democracy for Sale: Pemilihan Umum, Klientelisme, dan Negara di Indonesia* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2019).

through institutionalized, top-down party apparatuses, the empirical reality in marginalized urban coastal communities demonstrates that mobilization is decentralized and outsourced to informal intermediaries. Because the penal provisions of Law No. 7 of 2017 fail to accommodate the criminal liability of "any person" (*setiap orang*) or non-registered proxies during the critical campaign and quiet periods, a vacuum of accountability is created. Brokers exploit this legal grey area to carry out explicit money politics disguised as communal solidarity or religious assistance. This statutory gap not only severely undermines democratic integrity but also deepens the vulnerability of coastal populations, as the law effectively shields the exact informal networks that reduce urgent ecological crises into short-term financial commodities.

D. The Theologization of Ecological Crises as a Subversion of Environmental Justice

The politicization of environmental issues in Tambak Lorok is fundamentally intertwined with a manipulative deployment of environmental ethics, wherein immediate ecological grievances are systematically decoupled from structural accountability through the process of theologization. During severe tidal flooding (*banjir rob*), land subsidence, and economic shocks caused by fuel shortages, political brokers operating within *pengajian* spaces deliberately frame these socio-ecological disasters not as systemic policy failures, but as "divine trials" (*ujian dari Allah*) or cosmic destinies (*takdir*) that must be endured with spiritual patience (*sabar*).

This rhetorical maneuver represents a cynical corruption of eco-theological values. By elevating an anthropogenic disaster—exacerbated by poor coastal zoning, inadequate infrastructure, and state negligence—into the realm of divine ordinance, brokers effectively shift the burden of responsibility. The structural accountability of state actors and potential candidates is erased, transforming a collective failure of public infrastructure into an individualized test of personal piety and spiritual resilience⁴³⁴⁴.

This weaponization of fatalistic theology directly paralyses the civic agency and critical consciousness of the fishing community. Instead of demanding long-

⁴³ Javier Auyero and Débora Alejandra Swistun, *Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown* (Oxford University Press, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195372946.001.0001>.

⁴⁴ Paul Robbins, *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction* (John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

term, legally mandated environmental justice or structural coastal defenses, residents are conditioned to internalize their ecological suffering as a spiritual baseline. Consequently, the explicit cash distributions or material aid provided by brokers are no longer viewed critically as illegal electoral bribes or as highly transactional vote-buying mechanisms. Instead, within this distorted ethical framework, the vulnerable population interprets short-term financial incentives as a timely divine blessing (*rezeki*) sent to alleviate their suffering during a trial. This phenomenon is vividly illustrated in the narrative of a female resident of the fishing community:

"When the tidal floods drown our houses, and we cannot cook or sleep, the brokers come to the religious circle and remind us to stay patient, saying that this hardship is God's way of testing our faith. So, when they hand out money or food packets right after, we don't think about political corruption or election laws. We see it as God's answer to our prayers, a sudden blessing (rezeki) to help us survive the week. We feel grateful to the broker and the candidate for being the channels of that blessing." (Interview with Informant 10, March 7, 2025).

Socio-legally, this dynamic demonstrates how ecological vulnerability can be completely absorbed into clientelistic survival strategies. The narrative constructed by the brokers performs a dual function: it pacifies immediate ecological grievances while simultaneously manufacturing a moral-reciprocal obligation to repay the candidate with votes on election day. By substituting institutional accountability with fatalistic religious coping mechanisms, this "ecological brokerage" undermines the substantive core of both environmental ethics and democratic integrity. It reduces structural environmental rights into fleeting, commodified charity, trapping the marginalized coastal community within a continuous cycle of ecological suffering and electoral transaction.

E. Brokers political communication (environmental narrative as a political message)

Brokers in the Tambak Lorok fishing community not only serve as conduits for political information but also actively construct environmental narratives in political messaging. In every interaction, environmental issues, including land subsidence, seawater intrusion, waste accumulation, and diesel fuel shortages, are used as key elements to reinforce candidates' promises to voters. Brokers explain

that certain candidates are committed to building embankments, improving drainage, and providing easier access to subsidized fuel for fishermen. The environmental narrative is effective because it addresses real issues the community faces daily. In this way, brokers convey and package political messages with emotional and pressing local issues, making it easier for the community to trust and comply with directives. It is consistent with the statement of the following informant.

"Usually, they interact through community activities, Miss, for example, during women's social gatherings, group exercise in the field, or community service in the village. Sometimes they also attend fishermen's gatherings. So the conversation flows, not directly discussing politics, but rather sharing stories about aid, programs, or the latest news." (Interview with Informant 9, March 7, 2025).

This statement was reinforced by Informant 5, who actively listened to residents' complaints, including diesel fuel shortages, difficulties selling catch, and damaged road access. The openness was then conveyed through relevant political communication, consistent with the candidate's political message and the concrete problems residents faced. In this way, brokers not only convey information but also position themselves as bridges connecting community needs with the candidate's political promises.

"I first listened to their complaints. For example, about scarce diesel fuel, difficulty selling their catch, or the damaged road to the auction. That is what I conveyed to the campaign team, and then I brought it back to the residents. I said, 'This candidate understands diesel fuel, and he promises to help fishermen.' So I matched his message to the real problems the residents were experiencing. So the residents felt, 'Oh, this candidate understands our situation'." (Interview with Informant 5, February 27, 2025).

The relevance of the issues raised by brokers, particularly those related to the environment, makes community communication more readily accepted. The Tambak Lorok fishing community faces two simultaneous pressures: the ecological crisis and state negligence. Both situations force the community to place greater expectations on potential state actors, representing the greatest hope. In this context, the community does not necessarily view brokers as negative actors. On the contrary, some residents view brokers as political intermediaries whose function is to convey aspirations to the state. One of the informants stated that:

"In my opinion, brokers are not bad people. In fact, they are the ones who often convey our voices to the government or candidates. For example, when it comes to diesel fuel shortages or tidal flooding, they are usually the ones who speak

to candidates or officials. So, if we do not go through them, our voices will not reach us." (Interview with Informant 7, March 3, 2025).

However, another view rose from the group of fisherman housewives, who emphasized that the aspirational function of brokers is often mixed with transactional practices:

"They do like to give aid, but we know it is related to the election. Even so, we still need them, because going directly to the government feels like a long way off. So, even if they give us money or necessities, we see it as their way of making our voices heard." (Interview with Informant 9, March 7, 2025).

These two statements demonstrate the complexity of brokers' roles in grassroots politics. Political brokers are considered crucial bridges, opening political access for the fishing community marginalized by the ecological crisis and minimal state attention. On the other hand, the role is embedded in the logic of transactional clientelism, encouraging the public to recognize both the benefits and vulnerabilities simultaneously. This phenomenon demonstrates that perceptions of brokers are not singular but rather aspirational, transactional, solution-oriented, and problematic.

This study confirms that political brokers act as conveyors of candidates' messages and also construct political narratives based on environmental issues. Various local issues, including tidal flooding, land subsidence, seawater intrusion, coastal waste management problems, and limited diesel fuel supplies, provide the primary basis for connecting candidates' political promises to residents' real interests. This phenomenon is consistent with Aspinall's results, which show that brokers often adapt messages to the social context of the community to make communication more persuasive and strengthen political legitimacy⁴⁵. Therefore, the effectiveness of brokers' communication depends on both social networks and the ability to frame environmental issues as urgent problems that demand political attention.

Brokers use informal social interaction spaces, such as social gatherings (arisan), community service, and fishermen meetings, as a medium for political communication. This pattern is consistent with Berenschot's analysis, which emphasizes that brokers' power lies in their close connection to residents' daily lives, making political messages more credible than formal campaigns⁴⁶. In the case of Tambak Lorok, this approach was even more effective because brokers

⁴⁵ Aspinall, "WHEN BROKERS BETRAY: Clientelism, Social Networks, and Electoral Politics in Indonesia."

⁴⁶ Berenschot, "The Political Economy of Clientelism: A Comparative Study of Indonesia's Patronage Democracy."

not only conveyed the candidates promises but also considered residents concrete complaints, such as diesel fuel shortages or access to fish auctions. Therefore, the environmental narrative is not only an abstract issue but also part of daily life experiences that demand immediate solutions.

The phenomenon of brokers politicizing environmental issues reveals two contrasting sides. On one hand, this narrative provides a space for articulation for the coastal community experiencing ecological crises and feeling neglected by the state. It is relevant to Mihaylov & Perkins view that grassroots communities often use environmental issues as a means of political advocacy⁴⁷. On the other hand, politicization can also reduce environmental issues to mere electoral commodities. When political promises are not fulfilled, communities are plunged back into a cycle of uncertainty. Therefore, this study strengthens the argument that political communication brokers in coastal communities cannot be separated from the dynamics of the ecological crisis and the vulnerability of local democracy.

F. Non-compliance and violation of election laws

The Constitution protects the realization of every citizen's political rights through voting. This guarantee is specifically stated and regulated in Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections. Article 198 of the Law states that "Indonesian citizens who, on Election Day, are 17 (seventeen) years of age or older, are married, or have previously been married, have the right to vote." This provision affirms that the Tambak Lorok fishing community, as Indonesian citizens, has the right to equal opportunity to participate in elections without discrimination. Elections in Indonesia must be based on the principles of direct, general, free, secret, honest, and fair (LUBER JURDIL) as stipulated in the Election Law.

According to studies, the reality in the Tambak Lorok fishing community shows that political awareness remains low, as financial considerations often drive political choices. For example, an interview with informant 1 showed that:

"The Tambak Lorok community received IDR 150,000 per household. They assumed that the community's opportunity to receive this money was due to economic pressure and their belief that after the election, the winning

⁴⁷ Nikolay L. Mihaylov and Douglas D. Perkins, *Local Environmental Grassroots Activism: Contributions from Environmental Psychology, Sociology and Politics*, in *Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs5010121>.

candidate would not consider their own fate. (Interview with Informant 1, February 16, 2025).

The statement from informant 2 showed that:

"So I went into every community that needed it, visiting them one by one. I also started talking about aid. That was part of my political strategy, money politics, because that was the situation on the ground," he said. (Interview with Informant 2, March 3, 2025).

This statement demonstrates another level of transparency, namely the courage to acknowledge the practice of money politics as part of the reality of the strategy on the ground. For brokers, this is considered normal, as it requires team trust and consideration of residents' needs, which are often based on concrete assistance. Therefore, transparency is evident not only in conveying clear, understandable messages but also in acknowledging the practical political strategies prevalent in the fishing community. The political communication practices used by brokers in Tambak Lorok are not consistent with election law. Some brokers use environmental issues, such as tidal flooding, land subsidence, and diesel fuel shortages, to make political promises, often accompanied by offers of transactional material assistance. This practice clearly violates Article 523 of Law Number 7 of 2017, which prohibits money politics. Promises of direct aid to tidal flood victims or diesel fuel subsidies are often communicated not as official programs but as vote-buying.

The results show a lack of adherence to principle. Public political awareness remains low due to a tendency toward transactional politics. Interviews with informants showed that accepting IDR 150,000 per household was considered reasonable given economic pressures and the perception that elected candidates do not necessarily prioritize well-being. It reflects a weak internalization of electoral principles and the reduction of voting rights to a short-term barter instrument. Similar conditions are frequently reported in the literature on economically and politically vulnerable coastal communities and those marginalized (Budiardjo, 2019; Pratitaswari & Wardani, 2020).

The open admission from informant 2 that money politics is indeed a strategy in the field demonstrates the normalization of transactional politics. Brokers actively frame environmental issues, including tidal flooding, land subsidence, and diesel fuel shortages, as candidate promises, but almost always accompanied by material rewards. This practice directly contradicts Article 523 of Law Number 7 of 2017, which prohibits the provision of money or goods to influence voter choices. According to Muhtadi, vote buying in Indonesia is endemic and remains effective despite widespread awareness among voters that

the money does not guarantee policy change⁴⁸. Aspinall & Berenschot also mentioned that electoral democracy is underpinned by exchange relationships through brokers' networks. These results confirm a national pattern in which local issues are used as a form of political packaging, while material transactions remain at the heart of vote mobilization practices⁴⁹.

From an election law perspective, the practice in Tambak Lorok shows the existence of a "grey area" between legitimate political communication and violations of the law. Promises of environmental assistance for embankments and drainage, and of diesel fuel subsidies, may be considered part of a campaign program. However, when accompanied by the lure of money or goods, these promises fall into the category of money politics, contradicting the election law enforcement process and are often hindered by informal actors, such as brokers, due to limited regulations and difficulties in obtaining evidence⁵⁰. Normatively, any form of material reward intended to influence voters is clearly a violation of the law. This study enriches election law literature by showing that brokers not only act as political intermediaries but also as actors with the potential to undermine democratic principles through illegal practices. Berenschot explained the role of a broker in opening political access for the marginalized community, while also strengthening clientelism practices that undermine the quality of democracy⁵¹.

The results demonstrate that clientelism practices in coastal communities operate through the distribution of resources and the politicization of the environmental issues residents face daily. This phenomenon broadens the understanding of political brokerage in the global literature. Clientelism was previously understood primarily as the practice of individual material exchange between candidates and voters^{52,53}. Several studies have subsequently identified the collective dimension of clientelism, where benefits are offered at the

⁴⁸ Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Politik Uang Dan Dinamika Elektoral Di Indonesia: Sebuah Kajian Awal Interaksi Antara 'Party-Id' Dan Patron-Klien," *Jurnal Penelitian Politik* 11, no. 1 (2013): 41–57.

⁴⁹ Edward Aspinall and Ward Berenschot, *Democracy for Sale: Pemilihan Umum, Klientelisme, Dan Negara Di Indonesia* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2019).

⁵⁰ Muhtadi, "Politik Uang Dan Dinamika Elektoral Di Indonesia: Sebuah Kajian Awal Interaksi Antara 'Party-Id' Dan Patron-Klien."

⁵¹ Berenschot, "The Political Economy of Clientelism: A Comparative Study of Indonesia's Patronage Democracy."

⁵² Susan C. Stokes, *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism The Puzzle of Distributive Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107324909>.

⁵³ Hicken et al., *Buying Brokers Electoral Handouts beyond Clientelism in a Weak-Party State*.

community level⁵⁴. However, the Tambak Lorok case demonstrates a more complex form, where environmental issues, including tidal flooding, land subsidence, diesel fuel shortages, and coastal waste, are transformed into electoral instruments as effective as material patronage.

This study proposes the concept of environmental clientelism or ecological brokerage, a form that exchanges material resources and also incorporates promises of resolving environmental issues into electoral communication. The concept is relevant to the study of Indonesian politics and can enrich the global literature on political ecology, emphasizing the interconnectedness between ecological vulnerability and political strategy^{55, 56}. Furthermore, these results are consistent with comparative studies in the Global South that show how environmental issues are often exploited in populist politics in India, the Philippines, and Latin America^{57, 58}. By combining the literature on clientelism and environmental politics, this study offers a new framework for understanding electoral democracy in an ecologically vulnerable coastal community.

The influence of political brokers in Tambak Lorok is significantly amplified through their involvement in 'pengajian' (religious communal prayers). In these spaces, the boundaries between political mobilization and religious charity often become blurred. Brokers utilize the sanctity of 'pengajian' to establish symbolic legitimacy, framing their political activities—including the distribution of material incentives—as a form of social assistance or 'shadaqah' (alms). Consequently, the community often views these practices not through the rigid lens of Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections, but through a framework of social ethics and mutual aid. This socio-religious dynamic explains why legal violations, such as money politics, are often normalized and accepted as part of a moral reciprocity rather than treated as legal offenses.

The socio-religious dynamics within the Tambak Lorok community often obscure this legal violation. For instance, in 'pengajian' (religious communal prayers), political brokers often frame their material distributions not as electoral bribes, but as 'shadaqah' (alms) or social assistance, which aligns with local moral values of mutual aid. Furthermore, religious narratives in these gatherings are also used to moderate ecological grievances. Environmental issues, such as the

⁵⁴ Hicken et al., *Buying Brokers Electoral Handouts beyond Clientelism in a Weak-Party State*.

⁵⁵ Paul Robbins, *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction, 3rd Edition* (Blackwell Publishing, 2020).

⁵⁶ Scheidel et al., "Environmental Conflicts and Defenders: A Global Overview."

⁵⁷ Javier Auyero and Debora Alejandra Swistun, *Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁵⁸ Scheidel et al., "Environmental Conflicts and Defenders: A Global Overview."

persistent tidal floods, are frequently reframed as divine trials or moral tests. This perspective shifts the focus from the state's legal accountability to individual spiritual resilience. Consequently, the 'ecological brokerage' practiced here relies not only on material exchange but also on a subtle ethical-religious reinterpretation of environmental suffering, ultimately weakening the community's critical stance toward both election law violations and environmental injustice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that while three distinct forms of political brokers—activist, clientelist, and opportunist—are present in Tambak Lorok, their operational boundaries remain highly fluid and adaptive to the local socio-economic pressures of a vulnerable coastal community. Rather than adhering strictly to ideological or moral commitments, activist and clientelist brokers frequently exhibit opportunistic behaviors driven by material gains and pragmatic proximity to candidates. This structural fluidity enables brokers to establish localized avenues of political access while simultaneously reproducing a transactional logic that undermines substantive democracy. By transforming severe ecological grievances, such as tidal flooding, land subsidence, coastal waste, and structural diesel fuel shortages, into instruments of electoral mobilization, brokers reduce long-term environmental justice into short-term, commodified political currencies tied directly to election cycles. From an election law perspective, these communicative patterns intentionally exploit the ambiguity between legal political communication and illicit practices, thereby bypassing the prohibitions on money politics stipulated in Law Number 7 of 2017. The persistent coupling of ecological promises with immediate material rewards exposes the severe limitations of current formal regulations in monitoring and penalizing informal, grassroots intermediaries.

To address these systemic regulatory and socio-religious vulnerabilities, this study proposes a two-pronged approach encompassing legislative and community-based reforms. At the legislative level, future academic drafts (*naskah akademik*) aimed at revising the Indonesian Election Law must fundamentally overhaul the limiting definition of criminal accountability in vote-buying provisions. The current penal framework under Article 523, which restrictively penalizes only registered candidates, political party participants, and official campaign team members (*pelaksana, peserta, dan tim kampanye resmi*), must be expanded into a universal standard. By incorporating a broader statutory phrase such as "any person or informal intermediary proxy," the law can

effectively close the unregistered broker loophole and grant the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) the formal jurisdiction required to penalize grassroots actors who operate outside official campaign structures.

Concurrently, meaningful reform requires a shift in the socio-political role of local religious institutions, transforming communal spaces from passive vectors of clientelism into proactive platforms for democratic integrity. Bawaslu should structurally collaborate with local religious networks to formalize *pengajian* (communal religious gatherings) as community-based participatory oversight apparatuses (*Aparatur Pengawas Partisipan Berbasis Komunitas*). Instead of serving as domestic channels for distributing political handouts disguised as charity, these religious circles must be empowered to generate robust counter-narratives that explicitly align with Islamic jurisprudence, reasserting that accepting electoral incentives constitutes a prohibited act of bribery (*risywah*). Furthermore, by shifting the focus from spiritual fatalism to civic accountability, *pengajian* groups can be reoriented to serve as independent, grassroots monitoring forums that collectively deliberate, evaluate, and legally demand the fulfillment of candidates' ecological promises, thereby advancing the dual goals of environmental justice and electoral integrity.

From the standpoint of interfaith law and society, this study's most significant theoretical contribution lies in demonstrating that the tension between state electoral law and Islamic normative frameworks is not an abstract doctrinal debate, but a lived, operational dynamic with direct consequences for democratic governance. The broker's weaponization of *Fiqh* terminology reveals a critical gap in Indonesian legal pluralism: neither the state's positive law nor the religious legal order is equipped, in isolation, to address the phenomenon of electoral clientelism in Muslim-majority communities fully. An integrated interfaith legal response is therefore required—one that formally recognizes the religious community's normative authority while simultaneously aligning it with the state's democratic imperatives. It calls for a formal collaboration between the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), Bawaslu, and the Kementerian Agama (Ministry of Religious Affairs) to issue a joint *fatwa* and legal circular explicitly categorizing vote-buying distributed through *pengajian* channels as both *haram* (religiously prohibited as *risywah*) and illegal under Article 523 of Law No. 7 of 2017. Such a dual-normative pronouncement would directly close the jurisprudential loophole currently exploited by brokers. It would constitute a landmark model of interfaith legal harmonization in the service of democratic integrity in Indonesia.

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