

Votes Buying and Selling in General Elections: An Islamic Perspective

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Abstract: *This article aims to discuss the practice of vote buying and selling in general elections from an Islamic perspective. This research applies a qualitative approach with library research as its method. The data collection technique employed is documentation, accompanied by data analysis techniques such as content analysis, induction, and deduction. The conclusions from the discussion in this article are as follows. First, votes buying and selling in general elections is a practice where voters' votes are treated as commodities or merchandise in exchange for money, goods, or services. Second, from an Islamic viewpoint, votes buying and selling in general elections is a reprehensible practice and is explicitly prohibited because it violates the fundamental principles of justice, honesty, and trust that are advocated by the religion. Third, the practice of votes buying and selling in elections damages the social order by undermining trust in the integrity of the political system, reducing participation in elections, weakening social cohesion, and destabilizing the political stability of Islamic communities. Fourth, the Islamic solution to overcome the votes buying and selling in general elections includes revitalizing Islamic political education, increasing public awareness through campaigns about the dangers of vote buying and selling in elections, educating the public about Islamic values that support honesty and integrity in the political process, providing sharia sanctions for individuals involved in buying and selling votes in elections, as well as enhancing the role of ulama to promote political ethics under Islamic teachings.*

Keywords: *Vote Buying and Selling; General Election; Islamic Perspective.*

Abstrak: Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengulas jual beli suara pemilihan umum ditinjau dari perspektif Islam. Penelitian artikel ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian pustaka (library research). Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah dokumentasi, dengan teknik analisis data berupa analisis isi (content analysis), induksi, dan deduksi. Kesimpulan dari pembahasan artikel ini adalah sebagai berikut. Pertama, jual beli suara dalam pemilihan umum merupakan praktik di mana suara pemilih ditransaksikan sebagai komoditas atau barang dagangan yang ditukarkan dengan uang, barang, atau jasa. Kedua, dalam pandangan Islam, jual beli suara dalam pemilihan umum merupakan praktik yang sangat tercela dan secara eksplisit dilarang karena melanggar prinsip-prinsip dasar

keadilan, kejujuran, dan amanah yang dianjurkan oleh agama. Ketiga, praktik jual beli suara dalam pemilihan umum merusak tatanan sosial dengan menurunkan kepercayaan terhadap integritas sistem politik, mengurangi partisipasi dalam pemilihan umum, melemahkan kohesi sosial, dan stabilitas politik masyarakat Islam. Keempat, solusi Islam dalam mengatasi jual beli suara dalam pemilihan umum adalah: merevitalisasi pendidikan politik Islam, meningkatkan kesadaran masyarakat melalui kampanye tentang bahaya jual beli suara dalam pemilihan umum dan mengedukasi masyarakat tentang nilai-nilai Islam yang mendukung kejujuran dan integritas dalam proses politik, memberikan sanksi syariah bagi individu yang terlibat dalam jual beli suara dalam pemilihan umum, serta meningkatkan peran ulama untuk mempromosikan etika politik sesuai dengan ajaran Islam.

Kata kunci: *Jual Beli Suara; Pemilihan Umum; Perspektif Islam.*

INTRODUCTION

Buying and selling votes in general elections refers to selling their votes to candidates or political parties in exchange for money, goods, or services. This phenomenon is often regarded as a form of political corruption that undermines the principles of democracy by transforming free elections into economic transactions. Poverty and economic disparities often drive voters to sell their votes. In many developing countries where a large portion of the population faces economic uncertainty, the financial incentive to sell votes can seem like a short-term solution to financial problems.¹

Weak institutions and a lack of law enforcement also allow vote-buying to flourish. In countries with weak democratic institutions, there is often room for rampant corruption practices without significant legal consequences.² Low awareness and political education among voters can make them vulnerable to

¹ Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), hal. 223.

² L. Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 115.

manipulation and selling their votes. Voters who are unaware of the importance of their votes in a democracy are more likely to sell their votes.³

Increased competition in direct elections can push candidates and parties to look for quick ways to win votes, including buying votes.⁴ Advances in technology and media have also influenced the practice of vote-buying, making it easier to spread and coordinate this practice through social media and other digital platforms.⁵ In some cultures, social norms and views on corruption may differ, where the practice of vote-buying is not always seen as unethical.⁶

Though it can provide short-term economic benefits to voters, vote-buying has long-term negative consequences on the quality of governance and public trust in the political system.⁷ High campaign costs can push candidates to seek funds illegally, including vote-buying as an investment to win.⁸ Deficiencies or weaknesses in election regulations can also facilitate vote-buying, where legal ambiguities or weak supervision become loopholes for this practice.⁹ Globalization and rapid social changes can influence traditional political practices, including vote-buying, as external influences enter domestic politics.¹⁰

In the Islamic context, buying and selling votes in political elections is a severe issue because it involves fundamental principles of justice, transparency, and moral integrity. In Islam, selecting leaders is considered a trust (*amanah*) that should be used wisely. The urgency of this discussion arises for several profound reasons.

³ R. A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), hal. 337.

⁴ S. P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 58

⁵ P. Norris, *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 244.

⁶ R. D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 101.

⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and The Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 153.

⁸ Lawrence Lessig, *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress—and a Plan to Stop It* (New York: Twelve, 2011), 88.

⁹ B. Ackerman, *Voting with Dollars: A New Paradigm for Campaign Finance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 76.

¹⁰ M. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 412.

Islam regards leadership as a trust (amanah) that must be exercised reasonably and honestly. Selling or buying votes is a form of betrayal of this trust.¹¹ Islam emphasizes justice and equality within society. Vote-buying undermines these principles because it allows those with more wealth to influence elections significantly.¹²

Corruption is considered a major sin in Islam. The practice of vote-buying is a manifestation of corruption that can disrupt the social order and undermine public trust in political institutions.¹³ The development of a just and sustainable society is hindered if leaders elected result from vote-buying rather than their capabilities or policies.¹⁴ Public trust in the democratic process can erode if vote-buying becomes common. This is contrary to Islamic teachings about the importance of transparency and trust.¹⁵

The integrity of Muslims in casting their votes is crucial for selecting leaders that align with Islamic values. The practice of vote-buying diminishes this integrity.¹⁶ Islam emphasizes the importance of moral and spiritual education. Vote-buying indicates a failure in the nurturing of these values within society.¹⁷

Young generations can be negatively influenced by the practice of vote-buying they witness, which could diminish their commitment to the values of democracy and justice.¹⁸ In Islam, every action has consequences in this world and the hereafter. Vote-buying is considered a sin that could have adverse effects

¹¹ Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulumuddin* (Jakarta: Pustaka Amani, 1998), 129.

¹² Abu Zayd 'Abdur Rahman bin Muhammad bin Khaldun, *Muqaddimah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, 2005), 211.

¹³ Yusuf al-Qardhawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2002), 73.

¹⁴ Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi, *Economic Justice in Islam* (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2006), 95.

¹⁵ Morteza Mutahhari, *Man and Faith* (Tehran: Shariati Foundation, 1998), hal. 112.

¹⁶ Muhammad Akram Khan, *Islamic Economics and Finance* (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz University, 2000), 139.

¹⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 57.

¹⁸ John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*. Syracuse (Syracuse University Press, 1998), 184.

in the afterlife.¹⁹ Every Muslim has a social and political responsibility to participate in elections lawfully and fairly. Vote-buying violates this responsibility.²⁰

Thus, discussing vote-buying in general elections from an Islamic perspective is vital to ensuring that political practices within Muslim societies remain fair and consistent with religious teachings. There are several research gaps that previous studies have not fully explored. Rahman highlights the lack of empirical data in studies on applying Islamic principles to contemporary social issues, including vote-buying.²¹ Nasr discusses the importance of understanding the application of Islamic principles in different cultural contexts, but research on vote-buying tends to be limited to specific contexts without broad exploration.²² Al-Na'im discusses the relationship between Islam and the state, but comparative analysis with other legal and religious systems in vote-buying still needs to be improved.²³ Sachedina presents an ethical framework in Islam but lacks concrete examples of its application in preventing vote-buying practices.²⁴ Hefner researched the attitudes of Indonesian Muslim communities towards democracy, but further study specifically on attitudes towards vote-buying is greatly needed.²⁵

The state-of-the-art research on vote-buying from an Islamic perspective examines how Islamic teachings explicitly reject this practice based on ethical values and principles of justice. Previous studies have emphasized the prohibition of corruption and the importance of trust in leadership. This research extends that understanding by focusing on vote-buying's social, political, and spiritual impacts in Muslim societies.

¹⁹ Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad, *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1995), 308.

²⁰ Abul Ala Mawdudi, *Islamic Way of Life* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1967), 58.

²¹ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 143.

²² Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, 143.

²³ Abdullahi Ahmed al-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari'a* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 91.

²⁴ Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islamic Biomedical Ethics: Principles and Application* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 188.

²⁵ Robert W Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 102.

Research by al-Qardhawi highlights how corruption, including vote-buying, is forbidden in Islam because it damages the social order and erodes ethical values.²⁶ Al-Ghazali's work deeply examines the concept of trust (amanah) in leadership and how the betrayal of this trust is considered a major sin.²⁷ Morteza Mutahhari discusses the importance of moral and spiritual education in preventing corrupt practices, including vote-buying, that can degrade individual and societal integrity.²⁸

Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi emphasizes that social and economic justice is central to the social order in Islam, and vote-buying is seen as a barrier to achieving this.²⁹ John L. Esposito explores how political corruption, including vote-buying, undermines public trust and the integrity of the political system, a highly relevant perspective in Muslim societies.³⁰

This paper introduces several new aspects of the study of vote-buying from an Islamic perspective. This research explores the spiritual impact of vote-buying, a topic rarely examined in depth in previous literature, showing how this practice can affect individual faith and the social order in Islam. Focusing on how vote-buying influences the young Muslim generation offers new insights into the long-term risks to democratic values and integrity within society. The paper introduces and discusses potential Sharia-based solutions to address the problem of vote-buying, including strengthening religious education in the community and political institution reform. This research does not merely repeat what has been explained by previous scholars but also adds a contemporary context and practical solutions appropriate to the current social and political realities.

²⁶ Yusuf al-Qardhawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2002), 73.

²⁷ Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, 129.

²⁸ Morteza Mutahhari, *Man and Faith*, 112.

²⁹ Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi, *Economic Justice in Islam* (Jakarta, Gema Insani, 2006), 95.

³⁰ Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, 184.

The research questions in this study are: *first*, what is the concept of vote-buying in general elections? *Second*, what is the Islamic view on vote-buying in general elections? *Third*, what are the impacts of vote-buying in general elections on Muslim communities? *Fourth*, what are the Islamic solutions to address vote-buying in general elections?

METHOD

The approach applied in this research is qualitative. This library research type involves conducting studies or reviews on books or literature related to the issues being discussed. The data collection technique employed in this research is documentation, which is utilized to obtain information from books, archives, documents, writings, numbers, and images that are reports and statements that can support the research. The data analysis techniques used in this research are content analysis, induction, and deduction. Using content analysis, the phenomenon of vote-buying is analyzed as it is, without involving the context (internal and external) surrounding it when the thought (as text) is presented as a basis for analysis. The induction technique is used to formulate conclusions on vote-buying viewed from an Islamic perspective. This study uses the deduction technique to assess and analyze vote-buying viewed from an Islamic perspective.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding of Votes Buying and Selling

In general elections, voting buying and selling is defined as the practice where voters' votes are exchanged for money, goods, or services. This practice is often regarded as political corruption because it violates the basic principles of democracy, which demands freedom and fairness in the electoral process.

According to Sartori, votes buying and selling is an action that reduces votes to commodities, fundamentally damaging the integrity of the electoral process.³¹ Diamond describes that voting buying and selling violates the law in

³¹ Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, 223.

many countries and erodes societal ethical norms.³² Meanwhile, Fukuyama emphasizes that vote-buying can destroy public trust in democratic institutions and reduce the effectiveness of governance.³³

Lessig highlights that vote-buying is a manifestation of the failure of the political and economic system to regulate the interaction between money and politics reasonably.³⁴ Putnam observes that vote-buying can reflect a structural failure in the broader political system, including weak social participation and low social capital.³⁵

Thus, votes buying and selling can be understood as a practice where voters' votes are transacted as commodities or goods exchanged for money, goods, or services. This practice is a form of political corruption that reduces the right to vote from a democratic expression to an object of economic transaction. It violates the law in many countries, erodes ethical norms, and reduces public trust in the integrity of the electoral process and the effectiveness of democratic institutions. Further, vote buying and selling reflect the failure of the political system to regulate the interaction between money and power fairly and shows low social participation and social capital in a society. This definition integrates various perspectives on the negative impact of vote buying and selling on democracy, law, ethics, and broader social principles.

Forms of Votes Buying and Selling

The common forms of votes buying and selling in general elections and politics vary, demonstrating how votes can be transacted. Here are some common forms that are frequently encountered.

First, cash payments: The most direct form of vote-buying involves direct cash transactions from the candidate or their representative to voters in exchange

³² Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 115.

³³ Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues*, 153.

³⁴ Lawrence Lessig, *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress*, 88.

³⁵ Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 101.

for a promise to vote for them.³⁶ *Second*, Provision of Goods or Services: Votes can be bought by distributing goods or services such as food staples, school supplies, or free health services. This method often attracts votes in poorer areas or among needy voters.³⁷

Third, promises of projects or jobs: Promises of government projects, contracts, or jobs are also a form of votes buying and selling. Here, voters are promised jobs or contracts from the government if the concerned candidate wins.³⁸ *Keempat*, Fourth, Use of Intimidation or Threats: Although not a traditional form of "buying" votes, using intimidation or threats to force someone to vote a certain way also falls into this category because it creates a situation where votes are sold for personal or family security.³⁹

Fifth, payments for voter registration or transportation to polling places: This strategy involves paying or providing facilities to help voters register or reach polling places. Although it appears as logistic assistance, this practice is often carried out expecting voters to reciprocate with their votes.⁴⁰

Impact of Votes Buying and Selling

Votes buying and selling profoundly impact the integrity of elections and the quality of democracy. This practice reduces public trust in the electoral system's fairness and effectiveness and hampers good governance's *development*. Here are some of the negative impacts of votes buying and selling.

First, reduction of fairness in elections: Vote buying and selling reduces equality in elections where votes are no longer an expression of free choice but a result of an economic transaction. This disrupts the basic principle of democracy, which states that each vote has the same weight.⁴¹ *Second*, erosion of public trust in the political system: When the public becomes aware of votes buying and selling practices, it can lower their trust in the integrity of elections and

³⁶ Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, 223.

³⁷ Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues*, 153.

³⁸ Lessig, *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress*, 88.

³⁹ Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*, 115.

⁴⁰ Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 101.

⁴¹ Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, 223.

government, affecting future political participation and faith in the legitimacy of the elected government.⁴²

Third, the election of incompetent leaders. The practice of votes buying and selling tends to result in the selection of individuals based on their merit or qualifications rather than based on their financial ability to purchase votes. This can lead to the election of less competent leaders, which can be detrimental to public policy and national development.⁴³

It was fourth, hindering development and reform. The buying and selling of votes can prevent the necessary reforms needed to improve political and economic structures and practices. This is because leaders elected through corrupt means tend to maintain the status quo that benefits them rather than implement changes that might reduce their power.⁴⁴

Fifth, negative impact on societal morals. The practice of buying and selling votes can also worsen society's social and moral norms. When elections are frequently contaminated by corruption, the public can become cynical and apathetic towards democracy and good governance, damaging social cohesion and political stability.⁴⁵

Islamic Views on Votes Buying and Selling

In buying and selling, honesty is fundamental and essential to ensure transparency and fairness in every transaction. In Islam, honesty is considered an excellent moral trait and an obligation that must be carried out in all aspects of life, including buying and selling. In the case of votes buying and selling, honesty is closely related to the integrity of the general election process and the selection of leaders.

⁴² Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*, 115.

⁴³ Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues*, 153.

⁴⁴ Lessig, *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress*, 88.

⁴⁵ Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 101.

The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of honesty and avoiding deception. Allah says in surah al-Baqarah verse 283, encouraging Muslims to record debts wholly and honestly. Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad often emphasize the importance of honesty in buying and selling. In a hadith, he stated, "The seller and the buyer have the right to choose as long as they have not separated; and if both are honest and explain (the defect in the goods), they will be blessed in their buying and selling" (H.R. Bukhari, Number 2079).

According to Yusuf al-Qardhawi, honesty in choosing leaders is very important. Choosing leaders should be based on qualities and policies, not on rewards.⁴⁶ Honesty in transactions benefits both parties and strengthens social order and general trust in the system. According to Tariq Ramadan, honesty is one of the main pillars that supports a just social and economic system.⁴⁷ Honesty in buying and selling, including elections, is vital to maintaining public trust in the integrity of institutions. As John L. Esposito said, this trust is essential for the survival of a democratic system and good governance.⁴⁸

In the context of votes buying and selling, the principle of justice is fundamental because it includes the integrity of the electoral process and the equality of voting rights for each individual. Islam specifically emphasizes justice as one of the main pillars of managing society and good governance.

In Islam, justice is a moral value and a social basis that must be upheld in all transactions, including in general elections. The Al-Quran explicitly commands Muslims to act pretty, as stated in surah al-Nisa verse 58), which states the importance of carrying out mandates to those entitled to them and establishing laws among humans fairly (Q.S. al-Nisa': 58).

The Prophet emphasized that bribery and all forms of corruption, including vote buying and selling, are *haram*. In a hadith, the Prophet Muhammad cursed those giving and receiving bribes, which shows how profound the impact of corruption is on social justice (H.R. Muslim, Number 1713). Choosing a leader is

⁴⁶ Al-Qardhawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, 213.

⁴⁷ Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 88.

⁴⁸ Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, 184.

considered a great responsibility in Islam, and every Muslim is expected to exercise their right to vote based on an assessment of the candidate's policies and integrity, not because of material rewards. Yusuf al-Qardhawi emphasized that the selection of leaders must be based on their qualifications and justice, not because of external factors such as wealth or gifts.⁴⁹

Injustice in the general election process, including votes buying and selling, can damage the social structure and people's trust in the political system. Louay Safi describes how corrupt practices undermine public trust and hinder just and inclusive social development.⁵⁰

Adequate political education is considered vital in preventing the practice of votes buying and selling. According to Tariq Ramadan, education that focuses on ethical values and justice can strengthen the integrity of individuals and society in facing political challenges.⁵¹

In Islam, *risywah* or bribery is defined as giving something to someone to influence his decisions and make him do something contrary to his obligations or responsibilities. Islam strictly prohibits the practice of *risywah* because it is considered to damage the social order and cause injustice. The Koran explicitly prohibits bribery and all forms of corruption because they undermine the principles of justice that are highly respected in Islam. Allah says in surah al-Baqarah verse 188, which prohibits Muslims from taking other people's property in vain, including the practice of bribery,

"And do not falsely consume your neighbor's property, and do not deliver it to the judges, so that you may consume part of another person's property by committing a sin, even though you know" (Surah al-Baqarah: 188).

⁴⁹ Al-Qardhawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, 213.

⁵⁰ Louay Safi, *The Challenge of Modernity: The Quest for Authenticity in the Arab World* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 145.

⁵¹ Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, 88.

The Prophet Muhammad also strongly emphasized the prohibition against bribery. In a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah, the Prophet said, "The curse of Allah is on those who give bribes and those who accept them" (Hadith Ahmad).⁵²

Votes buying and selling in the context of elections is considered a form of bribery because it involves giving voters something (money, goods, or services) to influence their choice. This contradicts the principles of fair and free elections, which are the foundation of a healthy democracy. In this context, Yusuf al-Qardhawi explains how the practice of votes buying undermines the integrity and fairness of the election process, "Bribery in elections, including the practice of votes buying and selling, is a clear form of corruption and is a major sin that every Muslim should avoid."⁵³ John L. Esposito also states that the practice of votes buying and selling in elections erodes the very foundations of public trust in the political system, which is crucial in building a stable and just societal order.⁵⁴

Thus, vote buying and selling in Islam is considered a form of bribery (*risywah*) because it violates the fundamental principles of justice, honesty, and responsibility mandated in Islamic law. Any transaction aiming to influence decisions in an unfair or unethical manner, including in elections, is considered *haram* (forbidden) and must be avoided by Muslims.

In Islam, the concept of *amanah* (trustworthiness or responsibility) is highly significant, especially when selecting leaders. *Amanah* emphasizes each individual's moral obligation and responsibility to act with integrity and justice. Choosing the right leaders is part of fulfilling this trust because leaders significantly influence society's welfare and justice. This principle underscores the importance of electing competent and morally upright leaders, as they play a crucial role in upholding the principles of fairness and ethical governance in the community.

Indeed, the Quran strongly emphasizes the importance of upholding *amanah* (trust) and sternly prohibits betraying this trust. Allah says,

⁵² Imam Ahmad, *Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1995, Vol. 3), 497.

⁵³ Al-Qardhawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, 213.

⁵⁴ Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, 102.

"Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice" (Surah al-Nisa': 58).

This was further emphasized by Ibn Taimiyah, who stated that the election of a leader is a significant mandate that must be carried out by considering the ability and justice of the prospective leader, not based on personal preferences or material gain.⁵⁵

Votes buying and selling directly betray the concept of trust in the election of leaders. This practice changes the selection process which should be based on considerations of the candidate's integrity and capability into a transaction based on material gain. This damages the essence of democracy and violates Sharia principles. Al-Ghazali emphasized that any form of manipulation or corruption in the election process, such as votes buying and selling, is a betrayal of the trust given to the people to elect their leaders.⁵⁶

Yusuf Qardhawi also strongly criticized the practice of votes buying and selling as a form of fraud and a violation of the mandate that must be maintained when choosing a leader. He stressed that this kind of practice could damage the foundations of society and should be avoided by all Muslims.⁵⁷

Maintaining trust in choosing leaders is vital in Islam because it is directly related to the welfare and justice of society. Votes buying and selling is a form of betrayal of this trust and has severe consequences in this world and the hereafter. Every Muslim is expected to exercise his right to vote with integrity, electing the most capable and fair leader without allowing external factors to influence his decisions.

⁵⁵ Ibnu Taimiyah, *Majmu' al-Fatawa* (Riyadh: King Fahd National Library, Vol. 28), hal. 391.

⁵⁶ Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, 204.

⁵⁷ Al-Qardhawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, 213.

The Impact of Vote Buying and Selling in General Elections for Islamic Communities

Vote buying and selling is a practice that creates injustice and damages the social order because it disrupts the basic principles of democracy, which should ensure that every citizen has an equal and free voice in choosing their leaders. This practice changes the election from a fair process to a transaction based on financial or material rewards, and here is an explanation with relevant references.

Votes buying and selling creates injustice because it differentiates voters based on their economic ability to receive rewards, not based on equal voting rights. This practice benefits those with more resources to influence the outcome of elections, thereby negating the egalitarian principles that are the basis of democracy. John Stuart Mill emphasized that fairness in elections is fundamental to preventing majority domination and protecting individual rights. When votes are bought or sold, this principle is violated because elections no longer reflect the people's free will but rather the will of those who can pay.⁵⁸

The practice of votes buying and selling also damages the social order by reducing public confidence in the integrity of the political system and elections. When people realize that votes can be bought and sold, they may feel that their participation in elections is no longer meaningful or influential in bringing about change. Robert D. Putnam outlines how trust and social engagement are critical to a well-functioning democracy; when this trust is damaged due to the buying and selling votes, public participation in elections and other political processes decreases, weakening social cohesion and political stability.⁵⁹

Direct vote buying and selling create injustice by affecting equal voting rights and benefiting those with the resources to influence elections. Furthermore, this practice undermines the social order by reducing public confidence in the integrity of elections and the effectiveness of civic participation. Every country that seeks to uphold the principles of democracy must take steps to eliminate the practice of buying and selling votes to ensure justice and stability in its political system.

⁵⁸ John Stuart Mill, (1859). *On Liberty* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859), 224.

⁵⁹ Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 101.

The practice of buying and selling votes significantly impacts the morality of Islamic society and the younger generation. This impact is limited to reducing individual integrity and the erosion of Islamic values that support honesty and justice. Buying and selling denotes deviation from Islamic teachings, prioritizing justice, honesty, and transparency. Islam strictly prohibits bribery (*risywah*) and all forms of corruption because it can damage the foundations of social justice. In Muslim societies, this practice creates doubt and suspicion, reduces people's trust in the political system and their leaders, and weakens social bonds. Yusuf al-Qardhawi, in his work, emphasizes that corrupt behavior such as vote buying and selling is not only a violation of the law but also a sin before Allah, which erodes faith and destroys social morality.⁶⁰

Younger generations growing up in societies where votes buying and selling are familiar may become cynical about democratic values and political participation. The perception that political success can be bought with money reduces their motivation to participate actively in the political process or strive for social change through ethical and constructive means. Louay Safi highlighted the importance of setting good examples for the younger generation and explained that seeing corrupt leadership models can inspire apathy and cynicism toward politics, ultimately harming society's capacity for reform and renewal.⁶¹

Vote buying and selling is a serious threat to the morality of Muslim societies and can lower the ethical standards of the younger generation. This impact is not only damaging at the moment but also has long-term consequences for the stability and harmony of society. Therefore, Islamic communities must restore and strengthen Islamic values that support justice and integrity in every aspect of life, including politics.

Vote buying and selling is a very detrimental in a democratic system because they damage people's trust in the political process and government. This practice

⁶⁰ Al-Qardhawi, *Halal dan Haram dalam Islam*, 213.

⁶¹ Safi, *The Challenge of Modernity*, 145.

reduces the legitimacy of elections and affects the public's view of the effectiveness and integrity of government institutions.

When votes can be bought, the essence of elections based on people's preferences and needs is lost. The public becomes skeptical of election results because they no longer reflect their free will, but rather the will of those with the financial power to influence the outcome. Robert D. Putnam, in his work, explains that when corrupt practices such as vote buying and selling become standard, this reduces political participation because people feel that their votes are meaningless or that the results are already determined.⁶²

Vote buying and selling also cause people to lose trust in the integrity of the government. If leaders are elected through corrupt practices, the public will likely believe that the government will not act in the public interest but rather in the interests of those who have paid. Francis Fukuyama emphasized that trust is an essential basis for effective government, and when trust is damaged, the effectiveness and legitimacy of government are threatened.⁶³

The impact of votes buying and selling on people's trust in the political process and government is very detrimental, eroding the foundations of democracy and inhibiting people's active participation in politics. Efforts to eliminate this practice are critical to restoring public trust in government and ensuring the political process is fair and transparent, representing the people's valid will.

Islamic Solutions to Overcome Votes Buying and Selling

The Islamic solution in overcoming votes buying and selling places great emphasis on the importance of Islamic political education, which aims to provide a deep understanding of political ethics in Islam and the responsibilities of voters. The following is an explanation regarding Islamic political education. In the Islamic context, political education teaches about political mechanisms and strategies and teaches people about the ethical values and principles that must be adhered to when participating in politics. This education includes an

⁶² Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 343.

⁶³ Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues*, 26.

understanding of the prohibition of bribery and buying and selling votes and the importance of choosing fair and trustworthy leaders per Islamic teachings.

Education about Islamic political ethics and voter responsibility is essential to overcoming buying and selling votes in general elections. This education aims to develop voters who are responsible and aware of their rights and obligations in the democratic process. According to al-Ghazali, a voter must choose a leader based on justice, wisdom, and ability to lead, not because of the lure of money or goods.⁶⁴ Considering the importance of this issue, Tariq Ramadan emphasized that Islamic political education must include practical and theoretical aspects that provide knowledge and tools for voters to make appropriate and ethical decisions.⁶⁵

In implementing Islamic political education, scholars and educators in Islamic educational institutions play an important role. They need to integrate a curriculum that combines Islamic teachings with contemporary political science, creating voters who are not only politically informed but also morally and ethically strong.⁶⁶ In implementing Islamic political education, ulama and educators in Islamic educational institutions have an essential role. They need to integrate a curriculum that combines Islamic teachings with contemporary political science, thereby creating voters who are not only politically intelligent but also morally and ethically strong.

To overcome the buying and selling of votes, Islam also emphasizes the importance of increasing public awareness through informative campaigns. This campaign aims to educate the public about the dangers and consequences of votes buying and selling and remind them of Islamic values that support honesty and integrity in the political process. This awareness campaign must convey the importance of every vote in determining a country's political and social future and

⁶⁴ Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, 156.

⁶⁵ Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, 188.

⁶⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy*" (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 234.

emphasize that votes buying and selling violate not only the law but also religious principles. According to Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, a critical aspect of this awareness is teaching that Islam strictly prohibits all forms of manipulation in elections, including votes buying and selling, to maintain justice and transparency in every decision process.⁶⁷

Additionally, these awareness campaigns can use social media, mosque sermons, seminars, and workshops as platforms to spread this message. Sayed Sikandar Shah Haneef suggested that ulama and religious leaders should be active in playing their role in educating the people about the importance of political integrity and the consequences of unethical actions such as votes buying and selling.⁶⁸

In the campaign, it is also essential to include examples and case studies from various countries to show the negative impact of votes buying and selling on democracy and social development. Khaled Abou El Fadl emphasized that providing empirical evidence and concrete examples can make messages more relatable and motivate people to take proactive action.⁶⁹

Through effective awareness campaigns, the public will better understand the risks and long-term consequences of votes buying and selling. With increased awareness, it is hoped that there will be an increase in ethical and responsible electoral participation, ultimately strengthening the foundations of democracy and government with integrity by Islamic values.

Islamic law provides various forms of sanctions for individuals involved in vote buying and selling, based on the principle that such actions are a prohibited form of corruption. In this context, bribery and vote buying are punished because they violate the integrity and honesty emphasized by Islam. The Prophet Muhammad strongly condemned bribe givers and recipients. In the modern context, giving bribes to obtain votes can carry severe penalties. Mohammad

⁶⁷ Al-Qardhawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, 213.

⁶⁸ Sayed Sikandar Shah Haneef, *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2013), 142.

⁶⁹ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005), 237.

Hashim Kamali explained that this punishment could be a fine, imprisonment, or both, depending on the severity and impact of the action on society.⁷⁰

In cases where votes buying and selling are proven, the perpetrators may also be required to make restitution or pay back the amount they have corrupted. It aims to restore what has been lost and rid society of the negative impacts of corruption. Muhammad Taqi Usmani said that this restitution is essential to restore justice and ensure that crime is not profitable.⁷¹

Besides providing direct sanctions, Islamic law also encourages education to prevent corruption. Al-Ghazali emphasized that a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings and the consequences of sins such as bribery and vote buying can reduce an individual's tendency to engage in such acts.⁷²

Through the implementation of effective sanctions and educational activities, Islamic law seeks not only to punish but also to prevent the practice of vote buying and selling. Fair sanctions aim to uphold honesty and integrity, fundamental values in Islam, and maintain social justice and people's trust in their political system.

To overcome the practice of votes buying and selling, the role of ulama is crucial in providing advice and guidance to Muslims regarding political integrity. Ulama significantly influences Islamic society and can be a source of education and inspiration in promoting good political ethics through Islamic teachings. Ulama can actively enlighten Muslims about the importance of maintaining integrity in political activities, including in general elections. They can deliver sermons, seminars, and discussions that emphasize Islam's prohibition against the practice of votes buying and selling and the importance of choosing leaders based on the criteria of justice, ability, and righteousness, not based on material rewards.

⁷⁰ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2008), 276.

⁷¹ Muhammad Taqi Usmani, *The Islamic Laws of Riba* (Karachi: Darul Ishaat, 2002), 158.

⁷² Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, 204.

Ulama can use recitation forums to educate the public about the dangers of corruption and the consequences of buying and selling votes. Mohammad Hashim Kamali stated that the ulama can spread knowledge about Islamic laws related to political ethics and leadership through recitation.⁷³ Ulama can also collaborate with the media to spread campaigns about political integrity's importance. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in his work, emphasized that media is an effective tool to reach a wider audience, and scholars should utilize this platform to increase awareness.⁷⁴ Ulama must preach about political integrity and set an example through their behavior. They must demonstrate transparency and fairness in all aspects of life, including politics. Tariq Ramadan said that real examples from ulama are significant in shaping the political views and behavior of Muslims.⁷⁵

Through various educational activities and awareness campaigns, as well as by setting examples of good behavior, ulama can guide Muslims to avoid the practice of buying and selling votes and participate in the political system ethically and responsibly. Their active involvement is necessary to ensure integrity and fairness in the political process in Muslim societies.

CONCLUSION

Votes buying and selling can be understood as a practice in which voters' votes are transacted as commodities or merchandise in exchange for money, goods, or services. In the Islamic view, vote buying and selling is a very reprehensible practice and is explicitly prohibited because it violates the basic principles of justice, honesty, and trust recommended by religion. Islam emphasizes that every transaction in a political context must be carried out with complete integrity and without any coercion or material influence that could cloud judgment and fairness. Islam strictly prohibits the practice of votes buying and selling as a form of corruption that undermines the foundations of justice and democracy. In the

⁷³ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Shari'ah Law: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008), 112.

⁷⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2010), hal. 143.

⁷⁵ Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, 188.

Qur'an and hadith, many verses and sayings of the Prophet strongly condemn all forms of bribery and corruption.

The practice of vote buying and selling not only damages the integrity of elections but also tarnishes a political system that is supposed to represent the will of the people fairly and honestly. Voting, buying, and selling is a practice that disrupts the basic principles of democracy because it turns voting into a transaction based on financial or material rewards rather than the free choice of citizens. This practice creates injustice by differentiating voters based on their economic abilities, favoring those with more resources to influence election outcomes, and negating egalitarian principles. When voters can be bought or sold, elections no longer reflect the free will of the people but rather the will of those who can afford to pay. This practice also damages social order by reducing people's confidence in the political system's integrity, which reduces public participation and weakens social cohesion and political stability.

The Islamic solutions in overcoming votes buying and selling in general elections are: *first*, Islamic political education. Islamic political education aims to provide an in-depth understanding of political ethics in Islam and the responsibilities of voters. *They were second*, increasing awareness. To overcome the buying and selling of votes, Islam also emphasizes the importance of increasing public awareness through informative campaigns. This campaign aims to educate the public about the dangers and consequences of votes buying and selling and remind them of Islamic values that support honesty and integrity in the political process. *Third*, sharia sanctions. Islamic law provides various forms of sanctions for individuals involved in vote buying and selling, based on the principle that such actions are a prohibited form of corruption. In this context, bribery and vote buying and selling are punished because they violate the integrity and honesty emphasized by Islam. *Fourth*, to overcome the practice of votes buying and selling, the role of ulama is crucial in providing advice and guidance to Muslims regarding political integrity. Ulama significantly influences Islamic

society and can be a source of education and inspiration in promoting good political ethics through Islamic teachings.

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