

# The Development of Political Dynasty: Increasing the Number of Women Holding Political Office in Indonesia

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Indonesia has a strong patriarchal culture, and many Indonesians believe that political offices are better filled by men than by women. This, however, has begun to change as political dynasties throughout Indonesia have begun to push their female members to occupy political office. This paper seeks to describe, first, the type of women who have, with the backing of particular political dynasties, contested legislative offices (i.e. in the Indonesian Parliament, House of Regions, and local parliament); second, the type of women who have, with the backing of particular political dynasties, gained executive office at the regional level. This study uses a qualitative approach, with descriptive analytical methods; data were collected from documents, then analysed qualitatively. This article concludes that the women who contest legislative offices are the wives and children of dynasty founders, as are the women who hold regional leadership. At the practical level, this article helps explain the increased number of women holding political office in Indonesia. At the theoretical level, this article shows that, owing to their dynastic background, women's political representation in Indonesia remains anomalous.

**Key words:** *Political dynasty, development, women's representation, political office, Indonesia*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Studies conducted since 1945 have shown that women's involvement in practical politics has received little support from Indonesians. Several factors have contributed to this situation: *first*, Indonesia retains a highly patriarchal culture, wherein the political arena is commonly identified with men, and therefore women are deemed ill-suited to filling executive and legislative offices; *second*, matters of gender equality and justice are ignored in political

parties' selection processes, and as such women are not given priority; *third*, the media has continued to importantly shape public opinion regarding the involvement of women in legislative and executive politics; *fourth*, no networks exist between non-governmental organisations, activists, and political parties; *fifth*, owing to high levels of poverty and low levels of education amongst women, it is often difficult to recruit candidates with the capacity to contest elections against male candidates; *sixth*, women often experience family issues, including difficulty receiving permission to voice their opinions independently and participate in public affairs actively (Parawansa, 2002). Nimrah concludes that Indonesian society's strong patriarchal culture has deleteriously affected women's level of political representation, with patriarchal systems and structures positioning women as secondary to men and framing practical politics as a male domain (Nimrah & Sakaria, 2015). However, since the implementation of affirmative action in 2008, through which political parties are required to ensure that 30 percent of their legislative candidates are women (Syafputri, 2017), and since the implementation of direct elections in 2005 (Hanafi, 2014), women have experienced higher levels of representation in national and local legislature and in local executive offices.

At the same time, however, the majority of elected women are related to current or former officeholders, and thus members of political dynasties (Ekawati, 2018). This article defines political dynasty based on the views of several experts, namely Pablo Querubin (2010), Mark R. Thompson (2012), and Yasushi Asako et al. (2012). It understands political dynasty as a network of family members who wield executive or legislative power in a specific geographic region, with public offices passed from member to member through direct and indirect transfer processes (Sutisna, 2017).

The increased representation of women as a result of political dynasty is anomalous in that, as political dynasties emphasise family, gender concerns and candidates' capacities are often not considered. Such a system is prone to the abuse of power, yet offers no particular benefits for constituents or voters (Elisabeth Anita Dhewy Haryono, 2014). This paper seeks to show, first, the type of women who have, with the backing of particular political dynasties, contested legislative offices (i.e. in the Indonesian Parliament, House of Regions, and local parliament); second, the type of women who have, with the backing of particular political dynasties, gained executive office at the regional level.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the literature will expose previous studies into dynasty politics and women's political participation, thereby enabling this study's innovation and novelty to be shown. This section also exposes the conceptual framework that enables this study to present its findings.

## 2.1 Previous Studies

Several previous studies have shown that *affirmative action* policies that set gender quotas for political parties' candidates have been used by political dynasties as a means of ensuring female members' participation in legislative and executive politics. In the Philippines, Labonne et al. found that the passage of affirmative action has created a situation wherein women from political dynasties can inherit positions and offices that were previously held by their kin. However, women elected through dynastic channels may be unwilling to steer policy away from their families' interests and closer to their own preferences (or the preferences of other women), or they may be unable to do so as they are often figureheads or benchwarmers for their relatives, who constrain their decisions and retain de facto power. Similarly, if they are elected through dynastic channels, women may not have a mandate that enables (or encourages) them to prioritise women's needs and preferences—contrasting with previous work where women are elected via gender quotas (Labonne et al., 2017). In Indonesia, Fitriyah's exploration of Central Java's 2015 simultaneous elections found that women were increasingly being recruited based on kinship, and that this had driven an increase in the number of women candidates (Fitriyah, 2018). These previous studies have shown an increase in the number of women from political dynasties who have achieved legislative and executive office.

This study shows that women have been pressured to gain political office in the Indonesian Parliament, House of Regions, local parliament, and executive bodies. This study finds that these women candidates are not only related to regional leaders, but also to members of the Indonesian Parliament, House of Regions, and local parliament. This study has also found that Indonesia's strong patriarchal culture is beginning to be eroded by political dynasties' efforts to urge their female members to gain political office.

## 2.2 Conceptual Framework

The concepts of political dynasty and representation in this article refer to the distribution of power amongst women who are related by blood, including grandmothers, mothers, sisters, daughters, granddaughters, grandparents, etc., or by marriage, including wives, sisters-in-law, and mothers-in-law. These women have contested political office in the Indonesian Parliament, House of Regions, and local parliament, as well as in executive bodies throughout the archipelago.

## 3 METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach, with descriptive analysis. Data are collected from documents then analysed qualitatively.

## **4 WOMEN FROM POLITICAL DYNASTIES GAINING OFFICE**

Political dynasties have urged the daughters, wives, sisters, and sisters-in-law of current and former members to seek office in the Indonesian Parliament, House of Regions, and local parliament, as well as in executive bodies throughout the archipelago.

### **4.1 Women from Political Dynasties: Gaining Legislative Office**

#### **4.1.1 Women from Political Dynasties: Gaining Office in the Indonesian Parliament**

According to, the Director of the Megawati Institute, 42% of the female Indonesian Parliamentarians elected in the 2009 were members of a political dynasty. This indicates that political parties have failed to provide political education, but rather emphasised the recruitment of female family members (wives, daughters, nieces, sisters, etc.). There was no significant change after the 2014 legislative election (Elisabeth Anita Dhewy Haryono, 2014), where again a significant number of female members of Indonesian Parliament (39%) have kinship ties with political elites and dynasties, either through blood or through marriage (Ekawati, 2018).

Recapitulated national data indicates that, in Indonesia's 2019 legislative election, 118 women were elected to Indonesian Parliament for the 2019–2024 term. This represented an increase compared to previous elections, including the 2009 election that had long been touted as an example of good female representation. Two parties with significant female representation were the Nasdem Party (32.2%), which elected nineteen candidates (an increase from four in 2014), and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS, 16%), which elected eight candidates (an increase from seven in 2014). However, these gains did not change the fact that most women candidates were the kin of current/previous officeholders and elites (Sweinstani, 2019).

Examples include Nevi Zuairina, the wife of West Sumatra Governor Irwan Prayitno (elected to national parliament through PKS), and Lisda Rawdha, the wife of South Pesisir Regent Hendrajoni (elected to national parliament through the Nasdem Party). The electoral success of these women, the wives of governors and regents, does not directly affect the strengthening of women in politics. Their election is inseparable from the support of their family, as well as the support of state and non-state actors, which has implications for the establishment of personal ties between women and voters. At the same time, the wives of regional leaders still face domestication even after election as their political networks are built in the shadow of their husbands. There is thus no guarantee that they will be able to instigate change or advance women's interests after election (Ichsan Kabullah, 2019).

Also elected in the 2019 election was Indonesia's youngest parliamentarian, Hillary Brigitta Lasut; her father, Elly Engelbert Lasut, is serving his third term as Regent of the Talud

Islands, and her mother, Telly Tjanggulung, served as Regent of Southeast Minahasa from 2008 to 2013 (Liputan6.com, 2019). Women elected to national parliament in 2019 also included Sri Kustina, the wife of Penukal Abab Lematang Ilir Regent Heri Amalindo (Nasdem Party); Percha Leanpuri, the daughter of South Sumatra Governor Herman Deru (Nasdem Party); Riezky Aprilia, daughter of former Lubuklinggau Regent (Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle); and Hanna Gayatri, the sister of Ogan Komering Ilir Regent Iskandar (National Mandate Party) (Merdeka.com, 2019).

#### **4.1.2 Women from Political Dynasties: Gaining Office in the House of Regions**

Some of the women elected to the House of Regions of the Republic of Indonesia have blood ties with incumbent leaders. The youngest female member of the House of Regions, Jialyka Maharani, is the eldest daughter of Ogan Ilir Regent Ilyas Panji Alam and his wife, Member of South Sumatran Parliament Meli Mustika Yang (Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle) (Mataram.tribunnews.com, 2019). Ria Mayang Sari, the daughter of Jambi Governor Fachrori Umar, was elected to the House of Regions with 241,375 votes (Gatra.com, 2019).

Other members of the House of Regions are the wives of local executives. Gusti Kanjeng Ratu (GKR) Hemas, the consort of Sultan Hamengkubuwana X (Governor of Yogyakarta), has served since 2004, having been re-elected in 2019 (Radarjogja.jawapos.com, 2019). Andi Nirwana, the wife of Bombana Regent Tafdil, was elected to the House of Regions in 2019 with 130,324 votes (Lenterasultra.com, 2019b). Mirati Dewiningsi, the wife of two-term Central Maluku Regent Abdullah Tausikal, was elected to represent Maluku (Malukunews.co, 2019).

#### **4.1.3 Women from Political Dynasties: Gaining Office in Provincial Parliament**

Women from political dynasties have been elected to provincial parliaments throughout Indonesia. In Riau, for instance, several such candidates were elected in 2019: Septina Primawati, the wife of two-term Riau Governor Rusli Zainal; Eva Yuliana, the wife of two-term Kampar Regent Jefri Noer; Sewitri, the daughter of Pelalwawan Regent HM Harris; Sulastri, the wife of Member of Riau Parliament Agung Nugroho; Farida Sa'ad, the wife of the Deputy Commissioner of the Nasdem Party (Riau Office) (Riauonline.co.id, 2020). Similarly, in South Sumatra the wives of three regents were elected to local parliament: Meli Mustika, the wife of Ogan Komering Ilir Regent Ilyas Panji Alam; Susy Imelda, the wife of Muba Regent Beni Hernedi; and Rita Suryani, the wife of Muratara Regent Devi Suhartoni (Wartakota.tribunnews.com, 2019). A similar phenomenon occurred in North Sulawesi, where the wives of two regents were elected to local parliament: Titin Nurbaya Saranani, the wife of Konawe Regent Kerry Saiful Konggoasa (National Mandate Party); and Nurlin Surunuddin, the wife of South Konawe Regent Surunuddin Dangga (Working Groups Party) (Lenterasultra.com, 2019a). In North Sulawesi, elected members of local parliament included

Aaltje Dondokambey, the sister of North Sulawesi Governor Olly Dondokambey; and Nursiwin Dunggio, the wife of East Bolaang Mongondow Regent Sehan Salim Landjar (Matamatapolitik.com, 2020).

#### **4.2 Women from Political Dynasties: Gaining Executive Office**

Data from Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) shows that, in 2010, several incumbent regents and mayors were closely related to previous leaders. These included Kendal Regent Widya Kandi Susansi, the wife of former Kendal Regent Hendy Boedoro (who had been removed from office for corruption); Kutai Kertanegara Regent Rita Widyasari, sister of former Kutai Kertanegara Regent Syaukani Hasan Rais (also removed from office for corruption); Tabanan Regent Ni Putu Eka Wiryastuti, the daughter of a former regent; Kediri Regent Haryanti Sutrisno, the wife of former Kediri Regent Sutrisno; Bantul Regent Sri Suryawidati, the wife of former Bantul Regent Idham Samawi; and Indramayu Regent Anna Sophanah, the wife of former Indramayu Regent Irianto MS Syafiuddin (Prianto, 2016).

In Central Java, several dynasties have advanced women candidates. One of the candidate pairs contesting Klaten's 2015 local election, for example, was Sri Hartini and her deputy Sri Mulyani. Both are the wives of former regents. Sri Hartini (age 54) is the wife of Haryanto Wibowo (Regent of Klaten, 2000–2005), and had previously served as his deputy. Her running mate, Sri Mulyani (age 38), is the wife of then-incumbent regent Sunarno. Both of these women candidates' political careers, thus, benefited from the access provided by their dynasties. In Purbalingga Regency, Diah Hayuning Pratiwi (age 28)—the daughter of two-term Purbalingga Regent Triyono Budi Sasongko (2000–2010)—successfully campaigned alongside incumbent Deputy Regent H. Tasdi, later becoming his deputy. In Purworejo, Yuli Hastuti (age 51) was elected deputy regent, serving alongside Agus Bastian; she is the wife of former Purworejo Regent Kelik Sumrahadi (2005–2008). Sragen Regency elected Kusdinar Untung Yuni Sukowati (age 41), the daughter of two-term Sragen Regent Untung Wiyono (2001–2011). Kendal's 2010 election was won by Widya Kandi Susanti, the wife of former Kendal Regent Hendy Boedoro (Fitriyah, 2018). Banjar City's 2018, election was successfully contested by Ade UU Sukesih, the wife of two-term Banjar Mayor Herman Sutrisno. The support of her husband offered a strong foundation for her candidacy, and she and her running mate Nana Suryana received 52.32% of votes (Widiastuti & Nurohman, 2019)

Political dynasties have also been evident in East Java. For instance, incumbent Probolinggo Regent Puput Tantriana Sari is the wife of two-term Probolinggo Regent Hasan Aminuddin (2003–2013) and current Mojokerto Mayor Ita Puspitasari is the sister of former Mojokerto Mayor Mustafa Kemal Pasa. Rukmini Buchori, the former Mayor of Probolinggo (2014–2019), is the wife of former mayor M. Buchori. In the 2015 election, Haryanti Sutrisno was elected Regent of Kediri; she is the first wife of Sutrisno, Regent of Kediri from 2005 to 2010, and had contested the 2010 election against his second wife. In the 2017 election, Dewanti



Rumpoko was elected Mayor of Batu, receiving 44.46% of votes (51,748 votes); she is the wife of Eddy Rumpoko, who served as mayor from 2007 to 2017 (Rahayu & Chairunnisa, 2018).

## **5 CONCLUSION**

This article concludes that, in the 2019, the majority of women who were elected to the Indonesian Parliament, House of Regions, and local parliament Tulisan were the wives or daughters of previous officeholders or executives; a few were the sisters of these men. Second, most of the women who were elected to executive office with the backing of political dynasties were the wives of former officeholders; only a few were the daughters or sisters of these men. At the practical level, this article helps explain the increased number of women holding political office in Indonesia. At the theoretical level, this article shows that, owing to their dynastic background, women's political representation in Indonesia remains anomalous. In the future, it is therefore necessary for political parties and central/local governments to utilise non-dynasty approaches to strengthen women cadres.

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