

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY: WOMEN CANDIDACIES AND POLITICAL DYNASTIES IN INDONESIA'S ELECTIONS

Mudiyati Rahmatunnisa

Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran,
Jl. Raya Bandung-Sumedang KM. 21 Jatinangor, 456363
E-mail: m.rahmatunnisa@unpad.ac.id

ABSTRACT. This study investigates the intricate correlation between women's nominations for political office and the existence of political dynasties in the context of Indonesia's elections following the downfall of the authoritarian regime. The study specifically examines the complex factors that influence the experiences of women who pursue political positions in a setting where entrenched family legacies hold significant influence. The study employs qualitative methodology with a theory-driven approach. To construct arguments and address the inquiries presented, the author employs secondary sources of information. A multitude of books and recent, authoritative, and pertinent scientific journal articles were utilized as the primary sources of data. This study finds that amidst a significant increase in the number of women running for political offices, the presence of enduring political dynasties adds a complex and nuanced dimension to this evolving journey. Political dynasties provide better access for women with established networks, financial resources, and family influence to pursue political contestation and hence, increase the number of women in elected office. However, the patriarchal nature of many political dynasties in Indonesia frequently results in the marginalization of women, resulting in gender bias and limited decision-making authority. In addition, non-dynastic women candidates are discouraged from participating in the electoral process. The study also argues that women dynastic politics also committed corruption which could undermine the efforts of strengthening women's political representation This study highlights the need for a balanced perspective on the intersection between women's candidacies and political dynasties.

Keywords: women candidacies; political dynasties; Indonesian women representation; Indonesia's election

INTRODUCTION

Scholars express diverse opinions regarding the influence of political dynasties on democracy. Substantively defined here as politicians who have familial or marital connections to those who previously held political positions (Asako et al., 2015; Dal Bó et al., 2009; Geys & Smith, 2017; Kenawas, 2015; Smith, 2018), political dynasties could have both positive and negative consequences.

One potential positive consequence is that dynastic politicians can enhance the legislative body's effectiveness by providing expertise and mentorship. Family members within a locality can perpetuate diverse advantages, such as dynastic leaders using their electoral advantage to enhance gerrymandering tactics, prioritizing district interests over political party affiliations (Parker 1996, as cited in Geys & Smith, 2017).

Political dynasty also can have positive implications for gender representation and participation. In systems where women are not given many chances to run for office, dynastic succession can help women get into politics (Folke et al., 2016; Jalalzai, 2013). In the Philippines for example, term limits on elected posts increased the likelihood of dynastic women in local executive positions (Labonne et al., 2021). In addition, political dynasties help women overcome biases in the voting process and increase gender representation. For example, when Sweden implemented a gender quota, it led to a short-term increase in dynastic women being hired (Folke et al., 2016).

On the contrary, dynastic politicians often deter qualified candidates, reducing representation and policymaking quality (Geys & Smith, 2017). They have worse economic outcomes in countries like Japan, Brazil, and Italy (Asako et al., 2010; Bragança et al., 2015). Critics also argue they hinder democratic consolidation and foster corruption, as well as contribute to underdevelopment (Asako et al., 2015; Kenawas, 2015; Patrikios & Chatzikonstantinou, 2015). Their legacy, in particular, including those of George W. Bush, Justin Trudeau, David Cameron, and Marine Le Pen, contradicts democratic fairness (Smith, 2018). What is more, political dynasties can undermine liberal democracy by avoiding accountability, leading to corruption and rent-seeking activities. This, according to experts like Michels, Mosca, and Pareto, can result in resource diversion for governing interests and undermine public service quality, thereby preventing economic progress and promoting corruption (as cited in Tusalem & Pe-Aguirre, 2013).

Regarding the above discourse, Folke et al. (2016) firmly claim that across various historical periods and nations, there is a discernible trend wherein women exhibit a higher propensity than men to engage in political endeavours after the influence or association with a close familial relation or spouse. Several studies also have shown that there is a dynastic bias in women's representation at all levels of government, including executive and legislative posts at the national level, as well as offices at the local government level (Baturó & Gray, 2018; Folke et al., 2021; Labonne et al., 2021; Smith, 2018).

Furthermore, Folke et al. (2021) find that dynastic women are recruited and selected in a political context where party elites and voters have imperfect information about their qualifications. Dynastic ties shape political recruitment and selection, addressing informational asymmetry and influencing the proportion of women in dynastic politics. Folke et al. (2021) further add that gender quota policies also increase their recruitment.

No less interesting regarding women and political dynasties is related to the consequences of their existence in political offices. In this matter, Labonne et al. (2021) suggest that women's representation in political offices is influenced by their dynastic pathway, which may lead to a preference for family interests. Lee's intersectional study (2022) on South Korea's first female president, Park Geun-hye, highlights the impact of impeachment on women's symbolic representation. Despite her father's positive evaluation, her administration was marred by corruption and nepotism scandals. After over 130 protests, Park was sentenced to 22 years in prison, highlighting the negative portrayal of her performance and the nation's reluctance to vote for women.

The above studies show mixed implications of dynastic women politicians, as familial ties are crucial for women's candidacies and elections in many countries (Derichs et al., 2006; Jahan, 1987; Jalalzai & Krook, 2010). These ties help women overcome common barriers and cultural restraints. However, the potential negative impact of familial ties or dynastic politics can negatively affect democracy quality. In this matter, Indonesia's experience is worth examining in light of the growing trend of women candidacies and their electability following the establishment of the affirmative action policy since the 2003 election, as can be seen in the following Table.

Table 1. Percentage of Female Members of National Parliament in Indonesia

Year	Female	Male
1999	8.8	91.2
2004	11.09	88.91
2009	17.86	82.14
2014	17.32	82.68
2019	20.87	79.13

Source: Compiled from various sources.

Similar trend occurred in the candidacies of women in the contestation of direct regional head elections held since 2005. A number of women have been elected, either as governor or deputy governor or as regent/mayor or deputy regent/mayor (Dewi, 2015). As can be seen in the following two tables, which provide an overview of the increasing trend

of women's candidacy and electability in the four simultaneous regional elections that have been held since 2015.

Table 2. The Percentage of Women Candidates in the 2015, 2017, 2018, and 2020 Simultaneous Regional Elections

Year	Percentage
2015	7,5
2017	7,26
2018	9
2020	10,73

Source: Adhi & Belarminus (2024)

Table 3. Percentage of Women's Election in the 2015, 2017, 2018, and 2020 Simultaneous Regional Elections

Year	Percentage
2015	8,16
2017	7,43
2018	8,77
2020	11,02

Source: Adhi & Belarminus (2024)

Given this achievement, it is hard not to perceive them as a positive development. It is actually part of global development in which numbers of women leaders has increased since 1990s (Dewi, 2015). However, similar to women legislative candidates, many of the women candidates contesting in direct local elections are affiliated with dynastic politics (Jalalzai & Krook, 2010; Wardani & Subekti, 2021). As it is widely believed that candidacies and electability on the basis of familial ties are detrimental to the health of democracy. Hence, this study will further discuss the consequences of political dynasties in Indonesia's democracies. The aim is to understand how dynastic politics have brought mixed results amidst the efforts of strengthening women's political representation since the demise of Suharto's authoritarian regime. It also seeks to draw lessons from the Indonesian context to shed light on the challenges faced in enhancing women's political representation in other democratic nations globally.

METHOD

To address the research inquiries, this study employs a qualitative methodology, which is widely regarded as the most suitable for acquiring pertinent and all-encompassing data and information. Therefore, a "deeper" comprehension of social phenomena could be attained (Silverman, 2000). Furthermore, this methodology enables me to investigate a multitude of information sources with the purpose of developing a suitable analytical framework that serves as the foundation for evaluating empirical data and information. It is important to note, however, that the

research employs a theory-driven methodology, in which theory serves only as “a framework for critically understanding phenomena” and “a foundation for contemplating how the unknown might be organized” (Silverman, 2000).

In order to construct arguments and address the inquiries presented, the author employs secondary sources of information. A multitude of books and recent, authoritative, and pertinent scientific journal articles were utilized as the primary sources of data. Both book sources and journal articles are mainly related to the themes of political dynasties and democracy, women’s political representation and participation, and gender relations with political dynasties in the context of electoral contestation. The sources also include, of course, books and journal articles related to similar themes with the electoral setting in Indonesia. Similarly, supplementary data sources include a variety of news reports sourced from multiple authoritative media groups.

The data analysis was conducted utilizing a progressive focusing approach, specifically by gathering and evaluating relevant literature and data pertaining to the major research topics of this study (textual and interpretative analysis). The author modifies the technique of collecting data in response to the requirement to analyze additional concepts or explore new linkages (Parlett & Hamilton 1976, as cited in Schutt, 2012). By employing triangulation techniques (Creswell, 2009) and investigating evidence from various data sources, the qualitative data is validated.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Good

Globally, there has been an increasing trend of women becoming legislators and national leaders in countries around the world in recent decades (Dewi, 2015; Folke et al., 2016; Jalalzai & Krook, 2010). This was also the case in Indonesia after the collapse of the authoritarian regime in mid-1998. The number of women running for parliamentary elections dramatically increase with the implementation of Law No. 12 of 2003, which required that every political party must have a minimum of 30% female candidates on their list. The policy was then strengthened by making the requirement of a minimum 30 % female candidacies mandatory for all political parties participating in the legislative election of 2009. The provisions of the laws significantly increased the number of female legislative candidates, as can be seen in the following table 4.

Some important aspects pertaining to the accomplishments of 2004 and 2009 comprise the following: *first*, a substantial surge in the number of

candidacies and elections is a positive development in the ongoing effort to enhance the political representation of Indonesian women (Wardani, 2016). Undoubtedly, this is the expected outcome resulting from the implementation of the 30% gender quota. Therefore, this validates the contention that affirmative action policy in the form of gender quota is a crucial strategy for increasing the descriptive representation of women in parliament (Chen, 2010; Dahlerup, 2002; Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005).

Table 4. Female Candidates and Elected Female DPR Members of 2004 and 2009 Legislative Elections

	Legislative Election 2004	Legislative Election 2009
Number of female DPR candidates	2.507	3.910
Percentage of female DPR candidates	33%	34.7%
Number of elected females DPR members	61	101
Percentage of Number of elected females DPR members	11.09	17.86%

Source: Wulandari (2013)

Second, studies demonstrated that elected female Members of Parliament (MPs) are predominantly comprised of individuals from the political elite or political dynasties (Wardani, 2016; Wulandari, 2013). The 30% gender quota policy has forced political parties to nominate a number of female legislative candidates after a long period of not being counted in electoral events and amidst difficulty in attracting women into political life. According to Wardani (2016), to meet these demands, many political parties end up nominating more female legislative candidates who have kinship relations or family ties with political figures, both within the party and in other government institutions. From the perspective of political parties, the capacity and capability of female candidates who have kinship or dynastic ties with political elite figures are important assets to strengthen their chances of being elected. In other words, with practical considerations to win electoral contestation, political parties, in line with Folke et al.’s (2021) argument, kinship or dynastic ties become a “guarantee” of the quality of the nominated female candidates.

In addition, in line with Jahan’s (1987) argument, political dynasties play a crucial role in bolstering the prospects of female candidates by helping them overcome common barriers encountered by women in electoral competition, including financial constraints, lack of skills, experience, networks, and limited access to information. Therefore, as Folke et al. (2016) and Jalalzai (2013) also argue, political dynasties is conducive for increasing gender representation as it helps women overcome long term disadvantages in the election process.

Table 5. Background of Female Members of Parliament from the 2009 Election

No.	Background	Percentage
1	Political dynasties	41.27
2	Celebrities	25.40
3	Party Cadres	30.16
4	Social Activists	3.17

Source: Wulandari (2013)

The 2014 and 2019 elections showed a similar phenomenon regarding women's candidacy and electability. Wardani and Subekti (2021) in their study further highlighted that the trend of women's candidacy and electability is increasing. The gender quota policy and dynastic politics again facilitate political parties to nominate female legislative candidates. The role of dynastic politics in this case facilitates political parties finding female candidates who have the potential to be elected because of their capacity and capability due to having family ties with political figures (Wardani & Subekti, 2021).

In 2019, the percentage of female candidates nominated by political parties grew to 40 percent, which translates to 3,200 out of a total of 7,985 candidates for the DPR (People's Representative Council). This is an improvement from the 37.3 percent recorded in 2014, according to the General Election Commission (KPU). The surge in the number of female candidates has instilled hope among proponents of increased women's representation. Many of them believe that the recruitment of female candidates is finally progressing, following years of concerns expressed by advocates and party leaders regarding the challenge of attracting women to politics. Nevertheless, Wardani and Subekti (2021) find that female legislators mainly came from political families (34% of total elected female MPs in 2014 to 44% in 2019). In other words, political dynasties, or family connections in Jahan's words (1987), were central in the rise of Indonesia's female legislators' candidacies and election. It actually facilitates political parties to ensure that they recruit individuals with the capacity to attract large numbers of votes (Wardani & Subekti, 2021).

Table 6. Dynastic Candidates Elected to DPR in 2019 by Gender and Party

Party	Male	Female
PDI-P	6	10
Golkar	5	12
Gerindra	4	7
Nasdem	5	14
Demokrat	9	3
PKB	3	0
PKS	0	3
PAN	5	2
PPP	2	2
Total	39 (8.5% of total male MPs of 455)	53 (44.5% of total female MPs of 120)

Source: Wardani and Subekti (2021)

The case of Indonesia is actually not unique. Folke et al.'s (2021) research in Sweden and Ireland suggests that in a political landscape dominated by men, the recruitment of female legislative candidates can be made easier through dynastic connections. This is because political parties are motivated to attract talented candidates in order to increase their chances of winning elections. Wardani dan Subekti (2021) further add that the said argument explains why the introduction of a gender quota can cause a spike in dynastic women candidates. Political parties as “*selectorate*” eventually rely on dynastic ties as the criteria of female candidates recruitment. Indonesia in particular, Wardani and Subekti (2021) emphasize in particular the significance of familial connections in providing individuals with financial and network resources. These advantages are particularly crucial in the context of the *clientelistic* character of political struggle in the country.

The candidacies of Indonesian women in the direct regional head elections (*Pilkada, Pemilihan Kepala Daerah secara langsung*) also has similar characteristics to legislative elections. In her study, Dewi (2015) contends that during the second term of *Pilkada* from 2010 to 2014, “political familial ties” had a beneficial effect on women by creating significant avenues for them to actively participate in Indonesian local politics. During this period, there were a total of 13 female leaders in Java (Kediri Regency, Bantul Regency, Kendal Regency, Indramayu Regency, South Tangerang City, Banten City, Brebes Regency, Probolinggo Regency and Probolinggo City, Kuningan Regency, and Cimahi City) and three regions outside Java (Tabanan Regency, Kutai Kertanegara Regency, and South Minahasa Regency). Out of these leaders, 14 had familial connections, with either their fathers, or their fathers-in-law, or their husbands, or brothers being prominent politicians. This allowed them to effectively utilize the available resources and influences to secure political victory.

The influence of dynastic politics remains significant in the rising prevalence of female candidates in the following series of *Pilkada*. Out of the 7 candidates who participated in the 2015 *Pilkada*, 3 of them were women who had connections to dynastic politics. The number of candidates vying for regional leadership positions in the 2018 elections climbed to 7 out of a total of 14. In the following 2020 *Pilkada*, there were a total of 124 candidates, with 57 of them having connections to dynasty politics, and 29 of them being women. Therefore, dynastic politics serves as a crucial avenue for Indonesian women to participate in politics, as evidenced by current trends in women's candidacy (Amindoni, 2018; Wardah, 2020).

The Bad

Without doubt, the advent of the post-authoritarian regime brought about more opportunity for Indonesian women to engage in politics. Nevertheless, achieving an optimal state is a challenging endeavor. The pursuit of normative equality commenced with the implementation of the affirmative action policy in 2003. Despite the implementation of affirmative action policies over twenty years ago, it is argued here that women's participation in politics is still significantly influenced by dynastic politics. This is, among other things, due to the unequal objective capacity and capability of Indonesian women to engage in electoral competition, as well as enduring obstacles such as limited financial resources, skills, and experience. No less important factor is political parties prioritize pragmatism and do not differentiate between individuals based on gender, but rather evaluate candidates based on their popularity, electability and resources to succeed in electoral competition (Wardani, 2016).

Nevertheless, political dynasties also have negative consequences. As Geys and Smith (2017) highlight, the presence of dynastic politicians, who benefit from the advantage of incumbency, may discourage the participation of more qualified candidates. Consequently, this could lead to a decline in the quality of representation and a drop in the effectiveness of governing.

In Indonesia, even though there are gender quota policies, political parties, which are the main institutions who choose candidates, only look at how many resources and skills candidates have to get people to vote for them. Accordingly, that the power of entrenched local political forces, including dynasties, can close off opportunities for high-quality and independent female candidates because they are only "ordinary" female candidates who do not have the resource modalities of incumbents or those with ties to dynastic politics.

Female candidates who did not have family ties, particularly those who were not currently holding office, typically did not have enough influence to secure the top spots on party lists. Instead, they were often put at the third position or lower. They also had to contend with male candidates occupying superior positions, frequently as incumbents, past regional heads, and/or party leaders. In addition, they frequently encountered rivalry from female officeholders and/or candidates from political dynasties. In general, it was very hard for "ordinary" female candidates with fewer advantages to get enough votes to win (Wardani & Subekti, 2021).

What is more, another principle that is violated in the context of dynastic politics is the electoral contestation process which becomes unfair and offers

various privileges to candidates exposed to dynastic politics (Besley 2005, as cited in Geys & Smith, 2017). The next consequence is that free and fair competition, one of the important criteria for elections with integrity, is not fulfilled (Elklit & Svensson, 1997; Norris 2015, as cited in Rahmatunnisa, 2021). In other words, dynastic politics which is intricately linked to political inequality, posing challenges in establishing a level playing field for candidates who are not part of political dynasties in electoral contestation (Mariana & Husin, 2017).

No less worrisome consequence is with regard to the argument that dynastic politics undermine democratization process due to limited political participation as a result of the monopolization of the electoral process through the transfer of power to relatives (Trajano and Yoes 2013, as cited in Mariana & Husin, 2017).

This development demonstrates the ongoing necessity of ensuring equal access to promote women's political rights. Alternatively, only women hailing from affluent, educated, and well-known families will have the opportunity to progress.

The Ugly

As previously discussed, dynastic political practices undermine the principles of justice and equality in electoral contestation, particularly for female candidates. Numerous studies have demonstrated more adverse consequences of such practices. In fact, it is a mistake to grant opportunities to female candidates with political dynasties relations, according to affirmative action policy. This is because they do not constitute the policy's primary target. The focus of efforts to enhance women's representation should be on female cadres who, despite lacking economic, social, and political capital, have devoted their lives to their political parties with the intention of advocating for the interests of women (Wardani & Subekti, 2021). In their words, Wardani and Subekti (2021) highlight that "Dynastic politicians and local oligarchs have turned the quota to their own use, producing an elitist form of female representation that does not reflect the goal of greater equality in power relations envisaged when the quota was designed."

The increasing descriptive political representation of women in the legislature may be partially explained by the erroneous application of affirmative action policies, but this does not correlate directly with the publication of pro-women policies as has been voiced by many female Indonesian activists. In this matter, Labonne et al. (2021) once point out that when women attain political office via a dynastic pathway, no gender requirement is present. As frequent figureheads or benchwarmers of previous relatives, female politicians might be more

susceptible to the influence of their family's interests (in contrast to those of other women) or unable to represent female preferences.

Furthermore, the correlation between dynastic politics and the incidence of corruption, substandard public services, and hindered economic advancement has been extensively documented by numerous experts (Asako et al., 2015; Bragança et al., 2015; Kenawas, 2015; Patrikios & Chatzikonstantinou, 2015). This holds true for Indonesia as well. There have been more than ten cases of corruption committed by female regional leaders from political dynasties. Starting from Ratu Atut Chosiyah (Banten Governor 2007-2017) who is the daughter of Banten Golkar politician Haji Chasan Khotib, to Atty Suharti (Cimahi Mayor 2012-2017) who is the wife of the former Cimahi Mayor, Itoc Tochija. Then there was Puput Tantriana Sari (Probolinggo Regent 2013-2018), who is the wife of former Regent of Probolinggo, Hasan Aminuddin, and to Ade Yasin (Bogor Regent 2018-2023) in which her brother was the previous Regent of Bogor Regency. These cases prove that dynastic politics is prone to corruption, not only by male dynastic leaders, but also female, and hence debunked idea that women are less corrupt than men.

Those corruption cases involving female leaders exhibit a strong correlation with political dynasties, which can be traced back to their inception. Long cautioned by Roberto Michels, Gaetano Mosca, and Vilfredo Pareto, the avoidance of accountability by political dynasties erodes the very foundation of a liberal democracy. Rent-seeking and corruption may ensue in the absence of horizontal and vertical accountability mechanisms that are effective. This argument is additionally supported by the findings of Tusalem and Pe-Aguirre (2013), who present examples of similar failures in accountability. In due course, the lack of accountability erodes incentives to provide the public with services of the utmost quality, resulting in the misallocation of resources to promote the political dynasties and family in power. This line of thinking is consistent with Tusalem and Pe-Aguirre's argument (2013) concerning the relationship between political dynasties and corruption, hindered economic development, and inadequate public services.

No less worrisome consequence is with regard to symbolic effect of those corruption cases by women dynastic politicians towards the perception that the presence of women leads to less corruption (Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2018). With symbolic effect here refers to the concept of symbolic representation where women representatives as role models to those being represented (Pitkin 1967, as cited in Evans 2011). This symbolic representation is closely

linked to efforts to increase women's representation. It was further explained that the presence of women politicians could provide incentives for other women to engage in political activities. However, the cases of corruption carried out by those dynastic women politicians give the message that women and men are equal leaders in this corruption, contrary to the experts' argument that women leaders are relatively better and more honest. The negative impact is in the context of efforts to increase women's representation in various decision-making arenas. The corruption cases have the potential to undermine the initiatives aimed at enhancing women's representation, as Indonesian voters fail to recognize the merits of women politicians compared to their male counterparts. They are seen as having comparable tendencies towards engaging in corrupt practices.

CONCLUSION

Dynastic politics has brought mixed consequences concerning efforts to increase women's representation in the political arena. On the one hand, political dynasty provides resources and influence that contribute to the political victories for women's candidacies. It plays a crucial role in overcoming barriers faced by women in electoral competition. On the other hand, dynastic politics can hinder the opportunity for high-quality and independent women candidates without family ties. What is worse, in line with the argument that dynastic politics can lead to corruption, so as women dynastic politicians in Indonesia. In turn, corrupt practices by dynastic women politicians undermine the perception that women are less corrupt than men, impacting efforts to increase women's representation.

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