

Women's Strategy in Political Dynasty

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Abstract. This article examines the political dynasties in Indonesia's post-reform era focusing on women's role in regional elections. This research is designed in such a way that it will benefit Muslim women who are politically involved in Indonesia's democratic system. This study uses a descriptive social politics by observing the political dynasty's phenomena in Indonesia during the post-reform era. The data was collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documents all of which were then analyzed within a phenomenology approach. The study found that (1) Women or wives who replace their husbands as the heads of region made the best use of their husbands' charismatic image and social assets; (2) Women who got elected as the successors of their husbands perform as if they are 'puppets' of their husbands in running the government; (3) the factors which support the victory of the wives in regional elections include the use of their husbands' power when they are the heads of region by undertaking hidden campaigns, and the paternalistic social environments wherein the rate of rational voters is still low.

Keyword: Women, Regional Election, Political Dynasty, Reform Era

1 Introduction

The political phenomena in the post-reform era reflect the resurgence of women's power. They are no longer the companions of their husbands who become the heads of the region. Instead, they now could take over their husbands' position as the heads of a region once their husbands are no longer eligible for the government position. From one perspective, this can be considered a progressive development in a country where gender discrimination is widely accepted. Now, everyone has an equal opportunity for pursuing a political career. In addition, the social segments, created by the conservatives (both religious and cultural groups) that dictate women's position in politics, have now begun to deteriorate.

The liberal and moderate views, which seemed to supersede the conservative ones, are supporting women's active participation in politics. The wives of state officials or heads of the region are now allowed to participate in the regional election as long as they have the required academic qualification and political experience for the position. After all, education is not the sole determinant factor for one's political career.

On behalf of the very nature of democracy in which a citizen's political right cannot be limited, political dynasties are emerging and spreading everywhere. Some political parties are led by a family wherein policies and important decisions are no longer decided by the parties'

secretariat but are announced from the chairperson's family residence. The wife of a party's chairperson possesses an important role in controlling the direction of the party's policies regardless she is not a member of the party's management structure. Ironically, the party's constituents seemed to tolerate the practice of the political dynasty and follow their elites' aspirations with no hesitance. As a result, a perfect political dynasty is easily born, where the head of the family holds the main control of the party (chairperson of the party), his children are the members of the general secretariat, and the uncle may as well be the next presidential candidate. Moreover, there is a case when a party is led by a mother, then her sibling, children, and niece or nephew, all holding a strategic position in the party.

The question is whether it is really wrong to have such elaborate practices of a political dynasty? The answer would be a firm 'no' since democracy allows the latter to exist. What is more, for those who encourage such practices, the most solid base for it is the claim that their constituents demand those practices, although it remains unclear whether the demand comes from a designed selection process or not.

The transition from New Order Era to the Reform Era, which is marked by the national implementation of the decentralization based on the concept of regional autonomy, has opened up an opportunity for each region to hold an election for heads of the region and to manage its own government. A general election is one of the democratic mechanisms to elect new leaders for the nation. A large-scaled election is held to elect the members of the People's Representative Council (DPR), Regional Legislative Council (DPRD), Regional Representative Council (DPD), President, and Vice President. In the meantime, the regional election is held to elect Governors/ Mayors/ Regents and their Vices. Aside from these types of elections, there are also small-scaled elections, such as the election of the Head of Community and Neighborhood Organization (RW/ RT), Head of the Class, Head of Department, chairperson of an organization, etc. Regardless of the type, any election should be done directly, publicly, freely, and discreetly. Elections should be also based on the spirits of honesty and justice. Hence, the implementation of the election needs to be carefully and properly managed.

Before looking at the dynamics of Indonesian elections, one needs to know about the stories of elections in other countries where a political dynasty is taking place. A political dynasty does not occur only in Indonesia, Liza Maza said, but it has been also inherent in the Philippines, particularly regarding the participation of women in politics.² This can be seen from the following quotation:

“Sebagian besar wanita yang berpartisipasi dan menang dalam pemilihan umum lokal dan nasional di Filipina berdasarkan tradisi partai politik yang memiliki kekuatan, pengaruh dan sumber dana untuk menjamin kelangsungan partai. Sebagian besar anggota partai adalah dari dinasti politik yang meneruskan tradisi politik dari tradisi keluarga.”

(“Most women participated and won the local and national elections in the Philippines because they belong to the traditions of political parties that control the power, influence, and financial resources to ensure their existence. Most of the political parties' members are coming from political dynasties who continue the political traditions of their families.”)

The participation of the two female presidents, Cory Aquino, and Gloria M. Arroyo, in the Philippines' presidential elections, was all due to their families' supports. In fact, their participation was meant to preserve the legacies of their husbands and fathers. Liza further said that many female politicians in the Philippines are merely playing the role of 'transitional leaders' or 'puppets' who temporarily occupy the political positions previously belonged to their relatives (fathers or husbands).

Similarly, the same case happened also in Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto entered the politics just after her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was executed by the military court. On Thursday (27/12) she was murdered, which is a predictable sad ending for a member of one of the 'cursed political dynasties' in South Asia. In India, Indira Gandhi who became the successor of her own father, the late Prime Minister Mahatma Gandhi, was shot to death by her Sikh bodyguard as she was walking at her garden in 1984. She died in her Italian daughter-in-law's embrace, Sonia. Indira was the beloved daughter of Pandit J. Nehru who was the first Prime Minister of India. In Srilanka, Prime Minister Solomon Bandaranaike was murdered by a Buddhist monk in 1959. His wife, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, succeeded him as the world's first female Prime Minister. Her daughter, Chandrika Kumaratunga, was also a Prime Minister and President of Srilanka. Chandrika lost her right eye's sight in 1999 due to an attempt of murder organized by the Tamil Tiger Separatists.

In Bangladesh, which gained its independence from Pakistan in 1971, two of the country's prominent politicians were met by a harsh tribulation at the early of their political careers. Sheikh Hasina went into the world of politics after her father, the leader of the country's independence Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was murdered in a military coup in 1975. The country's leader after the coup, Gen. Ziaur Rahman died in a bloody military rebellion in 1981 which ended with a failure. His wife, Begum Khaleda Zia, was not afraid to leave her housewife life and stepped into the political world. Eventually, Khaleda Zia became the first female Prime Minister in that Islamic country in 1991, before her most powerful rival, Sheikh Hasina took over the title in 1996. The two politicians are now being arrested by the military, which supports the government, and are now facing trials on a corruption case.

Meanwhile, Mohandas K. Gandhi – also known as 'Mahatma' or the Great Mind – was killed in 1948. In addition, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, was also murdered in 1951 in Rawalpindi, the very same city where Benazir Bhutto died. As for other political dynasties all around the world, refer to the following table:

Table 1. Political Dynasties in Some Countries

| No | Country | President/Prime Minister | Previous Leaders | Family Relationship |
|----|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. | Philippines | 1. Cory Aquino | Aquino | Father |
| | | 2. Magapagal Arroyo | Arroyo | Father |
| 2. | Pakistan | Benazir Bhutto | Zulfikar Ali Bhutto | Father |
| 3. | Srilanka | 1. Sirimavo Bandaranaike (the world's first Prime Minister in 1959) | Solomon Bandaranaike | Wife |
| | | 2. Chandrika Kumaratunga (a Prime Minister – turn – President) | Sirimavo Bandaranaike | Daughter |
| 4. | India | Indira Gandhi | Mahatma Gandhi | Daughter |
| 5. | Bangladesh | Sheikh Hasina | Sheikh Mujibur Rahman | Daughter |

Source[1]

After the previous discussion on the stories behind the political dynasties in other countries, it is apparent that there are various interesting stories occurred during the implementation of Indonesian elections. During the implementation of general and regional elections, conflicts arise not only at the upper level, i.e. among the political elites who fought for the seats, but also at the horizontal level, i.e. among their constituents who are merely common citizens. The nature of the regional election, as seen from the political communication perspective, serves as an institutional means for political conflicts. An agreed good mechanism, political conflicts can be accommodated properly. However, when it comes to practices, many regulations in the mechanism of a regional election are often violated, leading to actual conflicts in the public sphere. The political tension in regions which hold regional elections normally escalates along with the rivalry among the competing political forces in the regional elections. Therefore, in such a context, politics is often illustrated in the jargon “who gets what and when”.

Based on the phenomena as illustrated above, this study seeks to investigate: (1) what are the social assets possessed by the Muslim women who participate in the regional elections? (2) What is the role of the wives who succeed their husbands as regents? (3) What are the factors behind the Muslim women winning regional elections? Accordingly, the aims of this study are to find out about: (1) the social assets possessed by a Muslim women or wives participating in regional elections, (2) the significant roles played by wives who succeed their husbands as regents, (3) the factors that help the Muslim women win regional elections.

The political dynasty reveals that the decentralization of power is not always distributed evenly to everyone. In other words, it would be difficult for Indonesia to become a democratic nation. Under such circumstances, the existence of political dynasties further ascertains that the centralization of power will slowly but surely remain a frequent phenomenon. Hence from the previous statement, it can be concluded that the political dynasties have a potent threat in disrupting the democratic system in Indonesia.

Deliar Noer [2] said that politics is an effort to gain power, which in fact attracts the interests of many people:

...”Politik merupakan aktivitas atau sikap yang berhubungan dengan kekuasaan yang bermaksud untuk mempengaruhi dengan jalan mengubah atau mempertahankan suatu bentuk susunan masyarakat. seakan tidak ada habisnya mempertontonkan dinamika politik yang menampilkan kekuatan status quo melalui familinya.”

(...”Politics is defined as any activities or attitudes related to power which aimed to influence by means of altering or maintaining a particular social structure – a never-ending show of political dynamics which reflects the power of status quo through one’s family.”)

Regarding the existence of political dynasties, Airlangga Pribadi states that the frequent occasions of the heads of region’s wives participating in the regional election are reasonable and legal phenomena. The reason for this conviction is because those wives assume that their husbands have a large mass basis. However, when the endorsements are not supported by a reasonable personal capacity, their bravery would only appear as a naivety. This is because those wives rely solely on their husbands’ public image, and not on their own capacity and capability as a person. If this happens, the effect would be then the birth of a political dynasty

– a monarchy-like government that emphasizes bloodlines or affiliations instead of actual qualities or capability.

Political activities in this context cause the existence of political participation. As Miriam Budiarjo said, political participation can be understood as a person or group's activities that are directed toward actively participating in the political world by electing political leaders and directly or indirectly affecting public policy. These activities include such actions as voting in an election, building a political network (contacting) with government officials or members of parliament, etc [3].

Similarly, McClosky in his book defines the term 'participation' as activities done voluntarily by the citizens through which they take part in the election process and directly or indirectly involve themselves in the decision making of public policy.

...“Political Participation” Will ever to those Voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and, directly or indirectly, in the Formation of public policy [4].

Samuel P. Huntington and Joan M. Nelson underline that 'participation' is the activities done by the citizens as individuals with the aim to affect the government's decision making. The participation meant here could be in the nature of individual or collective, organized or spontaneous, sustained or sporadic, peaceful or by force, legal or illegal, and effective or ineffective.

“By political participation, we mean activity by private citizens designed to influence government decision making. Participation is individual or collective, organized or spontaneous, sustained or sporadic, peaceful or violent, legal or illegal, effective or ineffective [5].

The realization of regional elections is definitely a form of activities related to power. Each political party has its own agenda, and so are the candidates competing in the elections. These candidates will optimize all their resources including those belonging to each of their constituents. Due to the eagerness to attain victory from a rivalry, there should also be the anticipation for a defeat. Yet, there are still many candidates find themselves not ready to face a defeat, which will eventually trigger massive conflicts in regions.

Citizens' political participation is frequently not under the awareness domain of rational voters. Rather, it emerges under a false awareness that was manipulated by traditional attachments, ethnic sentiments, patriarchal cultures, religious ideologies, and many others. Indonesians have agreed on a national consensus to embrace democracy through both general and regional direct elections. This momentum measures the political performance of both the central government and the regional government in a democratic system. Referring to Bingham's statement, there are five indicators of political performance: the first is the government's legitimacy, which is based on a claim that the given government represents their people's aspirations. The second is the management in the organization and bargaining through a competitive election in order to attain legitimacy. The third is a fraction of the mature population of the country being able to participate in the electoral process either as voters or as candidates who compete for important political positions. The fourth is all citizens

are able to vote discreetly without any pressure put on them. The fifth is the citizens and their leaders are able to get the benefit of having the fulfillment of their basic human rights as citizens of a country, including the freedom to speak for their aspiration, the freedom to form and involve oneself in organizations and groups, and the freedom in press [5]. Nevertheless, despite the attempts to fulfill the indicators mentioned before, in all reality, some of the regional elections that have taken place so far were unable to yield legitimacy.

2 Method

This article is a case study that attempts to explain the phenomena of political dynasties taking place in some regions in Indonesia and in some other countries. The data was gathered in the form of qualitative data, which is descriptive in nature. That is, the data were presented in words and descriptions rather than figures and numbers. Interviews had been conducted with some women leaders or wives who represent the political dynasties in the research sites.

3 Result and Discussion

During the Post Reform Era, the role of women has begun to enter the domain of regional election. It is unfair to immediately judge that the political participation of the wives of former government's official elites solely serves as an attempt to build political dynasties. Some of the regional leaders' wives who participated as candidates in the previous regional elections deny this negative view. Haryanti, the regent of Kediri Regency in East Java, explains:

....."saya mencalonkan diri menjadi Bupati Kediri bukan karena mendompleng jabatan suami saya, tapi, semata-mata didasari keinginan untuk memperbaiki kesejahteraan masyarakat Kabupaten Kediri yang belum maksimal. Hal ini saya rasakan dalam 10 tahun terakhir mendampingi suami saya saat menjabat sebagai Ketua Tim Penggerak PKK."

(....."I ran for the position of regent in Kediri was not because I wanted to use my husband's position for my own benefit, but it was because I truly wish to improve the welfare of citizens in Kediri, which is yet to be maximized. I have experienced myself for the past 10 years while I was still accompanying my husband and doing my duty as the chairperson of the PKK mobilization team.")

Similarly, Aida Ismeth admitted that she ran for the regional election to continue her husband's footsteps in developing the Riau Islands. She further denies the assumption that she only had her husband's popularity to help endorse her nomination. Since the beginning of the Reform Era, women are provided with a wider opportunity to hold important positions in legislature and executive institutions both locally and nationally. While during the New Order Era, the wives of the government officials were only actively participating as members or administrators of Dharma Pertiwi or Dharma Wanita. Nowadays, these ladies are able to run

for strategic positions in executive and legislative institutions through the general election which includes the 11 regional elections which are held to elect the head of the region.

The political phenomena in this Reform Era show the women's resurgence. They are no longer the companion of men who own important positions in the government. Instead, they can also take the role of their husbands' successors once the husbands are no longer eligible to perform their duties as government officials.

On one side, this phenomenon is an important improvement for this country, as it reflects gender equality. In such situations, everyone is equal in politics. The boundaries created by the conservatives (religious and cultural groups) regarding women's position in politics are reduced gradually. In the past, it was considered as extreme taboo for women or housewives to have active participation in politics. There was a belief that the only appropriate role or position for a wife to assume is to manage the household (cook, raise children, manage the house and family economy, as the conservatives believed) or to become the husband's life companion who would loyally follow and support his beliefs and course of actions (devotedly follows her husband to hell or heaven without doubts – figuratively speaking). Due to this belief, the intelligence or the capability of women is often less appreciated than their position as housewives.

The modern and liberal views, which support the active participation of women in politics, are now starting to take over. Nowadays, the wives of government officials in the central and local governments may as well run for an election if they have the academic capability and political experience required to hold the government positions. Education indeed does not count for everything in determining the political career of a person. A person with a Ph.D. degree may have the academic authority needed in his or her field, but he or she may not have the capability to connect with the people. On the other hand, a senior high school graduate probably has a better political capability and experience to be a political leader despite the fact that he or she never takes up a university degree.

The ideal option is that the person owns the academic authority and experience as well as the empathy towards the people that he or she is going to lead. The wives of government officials who are used to being pampered and have little empathy towards the people are definitely not the perfect type of leaders. Furthermore, no matter how intelligent and experienced a wife of a government official is, it will be hard for her to be elected as a government official in the region and much less in the country if she fails to gain the respect from her people.

The following is the fact on the phenomena of wives and children who are the successors of their husbands/ fathers as heads of region¹⁰ in various regions in Indonesia as summarized by Table 2:

Table 2. The Political Dynasties Established by Heads of Region

| No. | Regency | Regent | Former Regent | Family Relationship |
|-----|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. | Kendal, Central Java | Widya Kandi Susanti | Hendy Boedoro. (served as a Regent for two terms). | Wife |
| 2. | The Regency of Kediri, East Java | Haryanti Sutrisno | Sutrisno (served as a regent for two terms) | Wife |
| 3. | The Regency of Bantul, Yogyakarta | Sri Suryawidati | Idham Samwawi (served as a regent for two terms). | Wife |
| 4. | Indramayu, | Anna Sophanah | Irianto Mahfudz Sidik Syafiuddin | Wife |

| | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------|
| | West Java | (Periode 2010-2015) | (served as a regent for two terms). | |
| 5. | The regency of Bangkalan, Madura | Makmun Ibnu Fuad | Fuad Amin Imron (served as a regent for two terms). | Son |
| 6. | The Regency of Tangerang | Ahmed Zaki IskandarZulkarnain | Ismet Iskandar (served as a regent for two terms). | Son |
| 7. | The Regency of Probolinggo | Tantri Ana Sari | Hasan Aminuddin (served as a regent for two terms) | Wife |
| 8. | City of Probolinggo | Rukmini | Bukhori (served as a mayor for two terms). | Wife |

Source: www.jawapos.co.id. uploaded in 2013

The data in Table 2 reflects that in the Post Reform Era there is a political effort to create a sustainable political power or the so-called political dynasties in several regions in Indonesia. The following description provides more information on the mentioned political dynasties:

Widya Kandi Susanti

The Regent of Kendal, Widya Kandi Susanti, is the wife of Hendy Boedoro who served as the regent for two terms. In the 2010 regional election, the General Election Committee (KPU) declared the pairing of Widya Kandi Susanti – M. Mustamsikin (Yakin) as the winner after they gained approximately 43.33 percent of popular votes in the election.

Haryanti Sutrisno

In the year of 2010, citizens of Kediri held a regional election. Interestingly, the election became a ‘competition arena’ for the first and the second wife of Sutrisno, the former Regent of Kediri. Eventually, Nurlaila, who is the second wife of Sutrisno had to admit the superiority of Haryanti.

Sri Suryawidati

The previous position of Sri Suryawidayati was only as of the chairperson of Tim Penggerak PKK in the Regency of Bantul, when her husband, Idham Samwawi, was still the Regent of Bantul for two periods. However, during the period of 2010 – 2015, she succeeded her husband as the head of the regency after winning the regional election in 2010 with 67.8 percent of popular votes.

Anna Sophanah

Anna Sophanah was inaugurated as the regent of Indramayu for the period of 2010 – 2015 to replace her husband, Irianto Mahfudz Sidik Syafiuddin. Annah is paired with Supendi who was then the Secretary of Indramayu regency.

Ahmed Zaki Iskandar Zulkarnain

22nd March 2013 is an unforgettable date for Ahmed Zaki Iskandar Zulkarnain. He was inaugurated as the regent of Tangerang by the Regional Legislative Council of Tangerang (DPRD) to succeed Ismet Iskandar who is none other than his own father.

Makmun Ibnu Fuad

Makmun Ibnu Fuad can be considered as the youngest regent in Indonesia. He was inaugurated as the regent of Bangkalan in his 26 years and 4 months of age. Makmun even obtained an award from the Indonesian Record Museum (MURI). In addition, he was relatively very young upon his inauguration as the regent, but he was also replacing his father Fuad Amin Imron who was the previous regent of Bangkalan.

Tantri Ana Sari

Tantri Ana is the wife of Hasan Aminuddin, the incumbent regent of Probolinggo for two terms. After being elected as the regent, she becomes the chairwoman of the Social

Organization of Fatayat NU in the regency of Probolinggo. She also succeeds her brother in – law, KH. Hafid, as the chairperson of Regional Leaders Council in the National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa) which is located in the regency of Probolinggo in 2012 – 2017. At the same time, she is enlisted as one of the Chairpersons for the National Leaders Council of National Democratic Party (Partai Nasional Demokrat), which is a different political party from that of her husband who is the former regent of Probolinggo.

Rukmini

Rukmini is a legislator in the People Representative Council of Republic Indonesia from the fraction of Indonesian Democratic of Struggle Party (PDI – P), Electoral Area 2, East Java (Pasuruan – Probolinggo). She is the wife of the previous mayor, Bukhori, who served twice as the mayor of Probolinggo.

Nevertheless, behind those victorious phenomena, several wives who intended to succeed their husbands as the heads of the region were forced to accept the bitter reality of defeat as described by the following table 3:

Table 3. Wives Who Failed To Build Political Dynasties

| No | Region | Name of Candidate for Head of Region | Name of Elected Head of Region | Position |
|-----------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | The Regency of Sukoharjo, Central Java | Titik Suprapti | Bambang Riyanto | Regent |
| 2. | The Regency of Sidoarjo, East Java | Dr. Emy Susanty | Win Sudarso | Regent |
| 3. | The Regency of Kediri, East Java | Nurlaila (second wife) | Sutrisno | Regent |
| 4. | The Province of Kepulauan Riau | Aida Zulaikha Ismeth | Ismeth Abdullah | Governor |

Source: viva.co.id, uploaded in 2013

The table above shows that no matter how high the level of education one candidate may have, it does not automatically guarantee his or her capability to be the leader of his or her people. Furthermore, Nurlaila’s case is interesting as she ran for the election against the first wife who eventually elected as the regent. It has been believed that her defeat in the election was because polygamy in the region is considered a taboo.

The data above provides some lessons. The first is that the political dynasty brings a new type of ‘monarchy governance’ in the region. The government is characterized by the presence of an authoritative leader, endless efforts to maintain political power and the rebirth of feudalism or centralized governance. The second is that democracy will be deteriorated gradually, to the point where it will completely fail. The region’s autonomy that is decentralized will be reverted to a centralized system. The third is that a region with a wife of the incumbent leader is competing for the vice-regent and the secretary of the region provides empirical evidence that there is indeed a fraction in the government resulted in an unhealthy government.

The fourth is that a wife who succeeds her husband as the head of a region creates her own social asset after she got herself elected. For example, by becoming the chairperson of a social organization or the political party she strives to fulfill her needs for power and to secure her reign to its end. The fifth is that the political dynasty happens in regions where the incumbent reigns for two governmental terms. The sixth is that most wives who become the successors of

their husbands as heads of regency are proven to have no quality, capacity, and capability. The seventh is that regardless of how smart and experienced a wife of the head of the region is, there will be little chance for her to be the victor in the regional or national elections unless she could win her people's hearts.

4 Conclusion

From the description above it can be inferred that Muslim women or wives who become the successor of their husbands as the head of the regions made the best use of the charisma and social assets of her husband. After they got elected as the head of regions succeeding their husbands they seemed to become "puppets" in running the government of the region because, in reality, the ones who are in charge are their husbands. The factors that support the victory of the wives in regional elections are as follow: taking advantage of the husbands' power while still serving as the head of regions by doing hidden campaigns and taking advantage of the generally paternalistic social environment where the voters are less rationale.

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