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## Abstract

In this article, we provide evidence suggesting that almost half (44 per cent) of female candidates elected to Indonesia's national parliament in 2019 were members of political dynasties. Providing detailed data on the backgrounds of these candidates, including by party and region, we argue that several factors have contributed to their rise. Parties are increasingly motivated – especially in the context of a 4 per cent parliamentary threshold – to nominate candidates who can boost their party's fortune by attracting a big personal vote. Members of political dynasties (especially those related to regional government heads and other politicians entrenched in local power structures) have access to financial resources and local political networks – increasingly important to political success in Indonesia's clientelistic electoral system. We show that the rise of these dynastic women candidates is not eliminating gender bias within parties, but is instead marginalising many qualified female party candidates, including incumbents.

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## Keywords

Indonesia, women's political representation, gender quotas, political dynasties, affirmative action, elections

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## Introduction

The relatively low level of women's representation in Indonesia's legislatures has been a major cause of concern for both women's movement activists and scholars of Indonesian politics since Indonesia made the transition to democracy two decades ago (e.g. Bessell, 2010; Hillman, 2017, 2018; Prihatini, 2019; Satriyo, 2010; Shair-Rosenfield, 2012). In this context, at first glance, the results of the 2019 legislative election provide grounds for optimism that Indonesia may be turning the corner. The election produced the highest ever proportion of women elected to the national parliament or People's Representative Council (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, DPR), with 120 (20.9 per cent) of 575 seats, as well as 30 per cent (forty-one of 136) seats in the less powerful Regional Representative Council, or (*Dewan Perwakilan Daerah*, DPD). These numbers, an increase from 17.32 per cent (DPR) and 25.8 per cent (DPD) in 2014, have widely been seen as a sign of the slowly increasing effectiveness of affirmative action policies in Indonesian elections, which began with the 2003 Election Law when a 30 per cent quota of women candidates was introduced. In 2019, the proportion of candidates nominated by parties who were women increased, reaching 40 per cent (3,200 of a total of 7,985 DPR candidates) compared to 37.3 per cent in 2014 (KPU, *Komisi Pemilihan Umum*, General Election Commission). This increase in the number of female candidates generated optimism among advocates of greater women's representation, many of whom feel that recruitment of female candidates is finally improving, after years of complaints by advocates and party elites alike about the difficulty of attracting women to political life.

However, in this article, we argue that behind this positive result lies a less glittering reality: there is growing evidence of inequality among female candidates, and of parties entrenching that inequality in their pursuit of seats. The clearest sign of this shift is that the rise in the number of women elected to parliament was accompanied by an even more dramatic rise in the number of these women who came from political families. Using a unique data set of both male and female DPR members we have compiled mostly from media sources, we show that of the 120 women who won DPR seats, 53 (44 per cent) had close familial connections with political office holders and party elites, a significant increase in 2014. We show that the proportion of male DPR members with dynastic connections was much lower. There are indications that, in recruiting female candidates, parties are favouring women who have familial relations with officeholders, especially with regional heads – *bupati* in rural districts or *kabupaten, walikota* (mayors) in cities (*kota*), and governors in provinces – with the goal of making use of the political, economic, and social networks of these local powerholders. Party leaders expect that the wives, daughters, sisters and other relatives of such local politicians are more likely to be elected than women who lack such ties. We argue that this phenomenon explains the growing prominence of women with dynastic connections in Indonesia's national parliament.

The growing dominance of dynastic women politicians is, ironically, narrowing the space for election of other women, including those who have risen through the ranks of their parties as activists, cadres, and leaders, and even those who are incumbents standing for re-election. Looking at the distribution of candidates, we notice that parties

tended to nominate women from dynasties in electoral districts in which they were also nominating female incumbents, no doubt with the goal of increasing the party's chances of winning one or more seats in these districts. (Indonesia uses an open-list proportional representation system, in which votes for individual candidates are counted together with party votes; if the total obtained is enough to secure one or more seats, the candidate(s) with the highest number of individual votes are allocated the seat(s).) The result of parties running such women in the same electorates was that, in many cases, incumbents lost their seats to the dynastic candidates. In these electoral districts, the number of women elected did not increase, and the seats simply passed from experienced women politicians to newcomers, who frequently lacked credentials apart from their family ties. In some cases, parties nominated more than one dynastic woman candidate in a single electoral district, again with the goal of boosting the party's vote and chances of winning at least one seat, but with the effect that these women were competing against each other.

This change in women's representation occurs in the context of a decade's implementation of affirmative action policies designed to support the election of women. In 2019, Indonesia used a minimum 30 per cent quota for women candidates for each party in each electoral district. The quota in its current form is the result of long advocacy campaigns by women's movement activists. Inspired by the gender quota introduced in Timor-Leste in 2006, which required at least every third candidate to be a woman, Indonesian women's movement activists succeeded in convincing Indonesia's national legislature to strengthen the electoral law by adopting a quota with a mandatory one in three placement mandate for women candidates in 2008 (Wardani, 2008). Even so, the number of women placed at the top of their party's list remained relatively low: in 2019, only 235 of 1,256 (18.7 per cent) number-one positions on party lists of DPR candidates around the country were occupied by women candidates (Perludem, 2019). Yet data from three electoral cycles show that a majority of candidates elected to DPR seats are from the top of their party lists (2009: 65 per cent, 2014: 62 per cent, 2019: 68 per cent) (Margret et al., 2015: 15, 2019; figures compiled by authors).

In this article, we draw on interview material with female candidates[1] to argue that the rise in dynastic female politicians can be explained in part by how parties have responded to the gender quota. The quota is, at the core, an attempt to pursue positive discrimination in favour of women. The goal is to close the gap between women's and men's political representation, and so achieve greater gender equality in political representation and, ultimately, policy formulation. However, rather than primarily seeing it as an opportunity to increase the number of elected female representatives, parties are responding to the quota mostly in ways designed to achieve their own electoral goals: above all, to increase party representation. The result of this dynamic, and of other biases in the electoral and party system, is that the quota has generated generally disappointing results: women's representation in legislatures is increasing, but only slowly, and the number of women in legislative and party leadership positions remains low. More broadly, discrimination against women remains widespread, and policy outcomes rarely favour women.

We advance these arguments through three main sections. Our first section lays out the theoretical ground, explaining both how gender quotas have been used

internationally to increase women's representation, but also how dynastic politics can intersect with women's political representation. Our next section presents our major empirical findings from Indonesia, providing data on the dynastic backgrounds of both male and female DPR members, finding that female legislators are more likely to come from political familes then male legislators. In the third section, we turn to our qualitative findings to explain this pattern, examining party strategies in the 2019 election, and focusing on how parties recruited and supported female candidates. In our conclusion we contextualise our findings in the long struggle to increase women's political representation in Indonesia.

## Gender Quotas, Electoral Systems, and Political Dynasties

Internationally, there has been increasing attention paid to women's under-representation in political institutions over the last twenty years or so. In a wider context in which democracy holds that all citizens, both male and female, should have equal rights to play a role in formulating public policy, it has been recognised that the presence of women in parliament can lead to what Phillips (1995) has called "the politics of presence." The presence of women in representative bodies, Phillips argues, changes not only the procedural and institutional aspects of the legislative process, but also the legal outputs and discourse it generates.

But what factors influence the extent of women's representation? Scholars seeking institutional remedies to women's under-representation have focused on the electoral system and the main institutional "fix" so far proposed – gender quotas – and analysed the extent to which both affect the rate at which women are elected to parliaments (Allen and Cutts, 2018; Ballington and Karam, 2005; Barnes et al., 2017; Jones and Navia, 1999; Lijphart, 1995; Norris, 2004; Reynolds, 1999; Shair-Rosenfield, 2012). The electoral system is widely seen as playing a major role in determining the extent and nature of women's parliamentary representation. It is broadly accepted that gender quotas work best when combined with proportional representation in multi-member constituencies, especially when the district magnitude is large, simply because the higher number of seats available in such races allows for more complex patterns of competition and greater opportunities for under-represented groups. The "winner takes all" logic of single-member constituencies, by contrast, tends to reduce opportunities for women (Gray, 2003; Salmond, 2006). Drawing on Latin American cases, Jones and Navia (1999) have shown that in proportional representation systems, closed-list systems tend to produce higher female representation than do open-list systems because, in the former, parties can place their female candidates in winnable list positions, whereas in open-list systems it is left to the voters to determine which candidates are elected.

Meanwhile, over the last two decades, increasing attention has been paid to gender quotas, a form of affirmative action that sets a minimum number of female candidates – for instance, 30 per cent or 50 per cent – in legislative races, as the most effective measure to overcome female under-representation (Dahlerup, 1999). Introduced in many countries, gender quotas have been quite successful at increasing women's

parliamentary representation. At the present time, about 24.9 per cent of the members of parliaments worldwide are women (IPU, 2020); in some countries, it is much higher. Allen and Cutts (2018) argue that gender quotas have produced various positive outcomes, not only increasing the number of women elected, but also increasing participation of women voters in elections and initiating change in political cultures, including by reducing gender bias on the part of party leaders, and eroding negative stereotypes about women leaders in the public at large (Allen and Cutts, 2018). Even so, they acknowledge a mixed picture and, through case studies focusing on India and Lesotho, show that gender quotas have had limited impact in terms of improving the accountability and transparency of legislative bodies.

As we shall see, however, there are obvious challenges when it comes to implementing gender quotas. Indonesia has for several electoral cycles implemented such a quota, in the context of a proportional representation system (albeit open rather than closed list). The quota has increased the number of women elected. However, as we shall argue through this piece, even when parties are obliged to nominate women by the quota, in their recruitment strategies they still pay close attention to the resources each potential candidate is able to bring to the race, and to each candidate's ability to mobilise a personal vote. This is partly due to the highly competitive nature of inter-candidate competition in open list systems, but it is also due to the fact that parties have strong incentives to recruit individuals with the capacity to attract large numbers of personal votes given that parties are required to reach a 4 per cent national threshold to gain seats in the DPR. It is at the stage of recruitment of candidates – what Norris and Lovenduski (1995) famously called the "demand" stage of women's political representation – that the power of entrenched local political forces, including dynasties, can close off opportunities for high-quality and independent female candidates. As a result, we argue, the quantity of female representation may be increasing in Indonesia, but the quality is not rising at the same rate.

The fact that female political candidates often come from established political dynasties, to a greater or lesser degree relying on the name, authority, and resources of powerful male relatives, has been widely recognised in the comparative literature from many countries. Importantly, several studies draw attention to how particular electoral institutions can encourage the election of women who have dynastic connections. For example, Labonne et al. (2017) studied the results of term limits for local government mayors in the Philippines. They showed that when male incumbents reached their term limit, they were frequently replaced by female relatives (such candidates are often disparagingly called "puppets" or "seat warmers"). Moreover, Labonne et al. (2017: 6) find that "Whenever women access office thanks to their family ties, they may be unwilling or unable to enact policies preferred by other women." They show that dynastic female politicians are less likely to introduce policy changes benefiting women, or to change the nature of female substantive representation, than are women politicians who lack such ties.

Especially relevant for our inquiry is a study by Folke et al. (2021), which explores the connection between female representation, political dynasties and gender quotas.

Drawing on historical data from Ireland and Sweden, they note that increases in the representation of women in elected bodies is often accompanied early on by a higher proportion of female compared to male representatives who come from established political families. They explain this gap by reference to a recruitment model, noting that party selectors seeking to recruit promising candidates face informational problems when assessing qualified women in conditions in which women lack a history of political representation. As they put it:

> [I]nformational inequality can be partly overcome by dynastic ties: the qualifications of would-be junior members of the dynasty can be inferred from the observed qualifications of the senior member(s). Although this inherited signal of quality helps both male and female juniors, the effect is differentially larger for women due to their general informational disadvantages in a male-dominated political marketplace. This leads to a larger proportion of dynastic politicians among women than men. (Folke et al., 2021: 44)

This logic helps to explain why the introduction of a gender quota can cause a spike in dynastic women candidates, because the "introduction of a quota delivers a shock to the selectorate" (Folke et al., 2021: 55). Struggling to assess female candidates' individual abilities, party selectors instead rely on dynastic ties to assess the suitability of candidates. By the same token, they argue, dynastic representation tends to decline over time; as more women become involved in politics, informational inequality also declines. We shall argue in the remainder of the article that though the argument presented by Folke et al. (2021) resonates in certain respects with what occurs in Indonesia – certainly, party leaders often complain about the difficulty of finding qualified female candidates – there are also differences. In particular, we argue that the principal factor driving recruitment of women dynastic candidates is not the informational advantages they have, but the advantages in terms of financial and network resources conferred on them by their family connections – advantages that are increasingly important in the context of the clientelistic nature of political competition in Indonesia.

## The Rise of Dynastic Women: General Findings

In the 2019 election, the winners of the 575 seats in the DPR consisted of 120 women (20.9 per cent) and 455 men (79.1 per cent). They came from the nine parties that managed to gain a national vote total that exceeded the parliamentary threshold of 4 per cent. As noted, this result was a slight increase in women's representation in Indonesia's national parliament, from 17 per cent (ninety-seven of 560 DPR seats) in the 2014 election up to 20.9 per cent, and the high point of women's representation so far in Indonesian history. But it was not just women's representation that increased. Importantly, the proportion of the elected women representatives who had family connections – as wives, daughters, or sisters – with political officeholders or party leaders also increased. According to data compiled by Puskapol (Centre for Political Studies, University of Indonesia) in the 2014 election, 34 per cent of elected female DPR members were

**Table 1.** Women in the DPR: Results of the 2019 Legislative Election.

| Party | Seats | Women DPR members (% of seats) | Re-elected female incumbents (% of women elected) | Members of political dynasties (% of women elected) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PDI-P | 128 | 26 (20.3) | 14 (53.8) | 10 (38.5) |
| Golkar | 85 | 19 (22.3) | 7 (36.8) | 12 (63.2) |
| Gerindra | 78 | 14 (17.9) | 6 (46.2) | 7 (50) |
| Nasdem | 59 | 19 (32.2) | 0 | 14 (73.6) |
| PKB | 58 | 12 (20.7) | 5 (41.6) | 0 |
| Demokrat | 54 | 10 (18.5) | 6 (60) | 3 (30) |
| PKS | 50 | 8 (16) | 1 (12.5) | 3 (37.5) |
| PAN | 44 | 7 (16) | 5 (71.4) | 2 (28.6) |
| PPP | 19 | 5 (26.3) | 1 (20) | 2 (40) |
| Total | 575 | 120 (20.9) | 46 (38.3) | 53 (44.2) |

*Source*: Party seat numbers from the General Electoral Commission (www.kpu.go.id); data on candidate backgrounds compiled by the authors from media reports.
*Note*: DPR: *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (People's Representative Council); PAN: *Partai Amanat Nasional* (National Mandate Party); PDI-P: *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan* (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle); PKB: *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (National Awakening Party); PKS: *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (Prosperous Justice Party); PPP: *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (United Development Party).

members of political dynasties (Puskapol, 2014). In 2019, based on our analysis of candidate backgrounds, in which we relied primarily on media reports, the figure increased to 44 per cent (fifty-three of the 120 elected women DPR members) (Table 1).[2] This is a very high percentage when compared to elected male candidates with dynastic backgrounds, who, according to our data represented thirty-nine (or 8.5 per cent) of the 455 men elected to the DPR, with most parties returning a higher proportion of female than male dynastic DPR members (Table 2). Finally, when we mapped out the family relations of these DPR members (Table 3), it can be seen that these relationships are diverse, incorporating children, wives, and other relatives of regional government heads, DPR members, and party leaders.

Among the noteworthy results indicated by Table 1 are the relatively high (compared to previous elections) proportion of women elected across all parties (all above 15 per cent), as well as particular standout performances. Nasdem, with women making up 32 per cent of its elected DPR members, achieved the greatest female representation yet recorded of any Indonesian party. This was only the second time this party contested an election, and the number of women it succeeded in sending to the DPR more than tripled, up from only six in 2014. Ironically, however, none of the six Nasdem female incumbents managed to hold their seats. One of the Islamic parties, Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, PKS), significantly increased its female representation, with eight women elected, up from only one in 2014 (the previous highest number for the party was three, in 2004). United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan*

**Table 2.** Dynastic Candidates Elected to the DPR in 2019 by Gender and Party.

| | Men | Women |
|---|---|---|
| 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 DPR members: 455) | 53 (44.2% of total female DPR members: 120) |

*Source*: Party seat numbers from the General Electoral Commission (www.kpu.go.id); data on candidate backgrounds compiled by the authors from media reports.
*Note*: DPR: *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (People's Representative Council); PAN: *Partai Amanat Nasional* (National Mandate Party); PDI-P: *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan* (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle); PKB: *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (National Awakening Party); PKS: *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (Prosperous Justice Party); PPP: *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (United Development Party).

*Pembangunan*, PPP), by contrast, managed to maintain the relatively high percentage of women in its DPR delegation (which had been highest of any party in 2014–2019, at 25.6 per cent – ten out of thirty-nine DPR seats) although the number of its candidates elected to the DPR fell by half, from thirty-eight to nineteen. Notably, one of the victorious female PPP candidates was from Aceh province, a region that implements Islamic shariah in a manner that is often seen as discriminating against women and that had not previously elected a woman DPR member in the post-Suharto period (the candidate was the former mayor of Banda Aceh, the provincial capital).

According to Folke et al. (2021), candidates can be categorised as dynastic if they have marriage or blood ties to serving or former politicians. It is possible to group female dynastic members of the DPR into two main groups: (1) family members of serving or former regional heads and deputy regional heads (64 per cent), and (2) family members of party leaders or politicians (34 per cent) (Table 3). These dynastic candidates were elected in regions from across Indonesia: 42 per cent were from various provinces in Java; 23.1 per cent were from Sumatra, and 19.2 per cent were from Sulawesi, with the remainder from other parts of Indonesia.

Importantly, dynastic politics is not confined to female DPR members; there are also male DPR members who have family connections with other politicians – but at a rate that is much lower than for female DPR members. Our data show that 39 male members of the DPR elected in 2019 had dynastic connections, or only 8.5 per cent of the total number of male DPR members (455). Interestingly, they were mostly the sons of party leaders or DPR members (38 per cent), or the sons of serving or former regional heads

**Table 3.** Family Backgrounds of DPR Members from Political Dynasties.

| Males | | Females | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Son of regional head (former or current) | 11 (28.2%) | Daughter of regional head (former or current) | 9 (17%) |
| Brother or close relative of regional head (former or current) | 6 (15.4%) | Wife of current regional head or deputy regional head | 15 (28.3%) |
| Son of party leader/DPR member | 15 (38.5%) | Wife of former regional head or deputy | 6 (11.3%) |
| Brother or close relative of party leader | 6 (15.4%) | Sister or close relative of regional head (former or current) | 4 (7.6%) |
| Husband of party leader | 1 (2.6%) | Wife of party leader/DPR member | 7 (13.2%) |
| | | Daughter of party leader/ DPR member | 11 (20.8%) |
| | | Sister or close relative of party leader | 1 (1.9%) |
| Total | 39 | | 53 |

*Source*: Compiled by the authors from media reports.
*Note*: DPR: *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (People's Representative Council).

(28.2 per cent). In contrast, women with dynastic connections were far more likely to be the wives of politicians (53 per cent) (we identified only one man who followed his wife into politics; Table 3).

As the tables show, the three parties with the largest number of women with dynastic backgrounds elected were Nasdem, Golkar, and Gerindra (each so-called nationalist or catch-all parties): fourteen of the nineteen women elected from Nasdem had such backgrounds, as did twelve of the nineteen from Golkar, and seven of the fourteen from Gerindra. In particular, Nasdem made a major push to expand its DPR representation (and succeeded, with an increase of 40 per cent compared to 2014) largely by recruiting powerful local actors: of its fifty-nine seats, nineteen were won by dynastic candidates (five men and fourteen women), another four were taken by (male) former regional heads. Both Golkar and Gerindra were similar. A majority (63 per cent) of Golkar's elected female DPR members had dynastic backgrounds, as did 10.6 per cent (seven of sixty-six) of its men; eleven of its DPR members were former regional heads (all men). For Gerindra, as well as dynastic women, four of its sixty-five male DPR members had dynastic connections, while eight were former regional heads. In short, these parties are each becoming both increasingly dynastic, and increasingly relying on networks of powerful local politicians, pointing to the increasing hold of clientelism in Indonesian politics (Aspinall and Berenschot, 2019). It should be noted, however, that although the proportion of successful women candidates who had dynastic backgrounds was

especially high in these three parties, Table 1 indicates that such women were found in all parties represented in the DPR. In short, the tendency towards dynastic connections among winning female candidates is seen across all of Indonesia's major parties.

With regard to the successful female candidates who had dynastic connections, as already noted, the largest single group consisted of fifteen women who were wives of serving regional government heads or their deputies: they included three wives of governors, one wife of a deputy governor, and eleven wives of *bupati* or mayors. In addition, there were five daughters and sisters of regional government heads and deputies. Such women tended to win in provinces which had previously elected few, or even no, women to the DPR. Some of them came from parts of Eastern Indonesian with strongly patriarchal local cultures (Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, Maluku, Papua), highly clientelistic politics (Aspinall and Berenschot, 2019), relatively under-developed economies, and that are relatively remote and inaccessible.[3]

Let us consider the patterns in some of these provinces. One is Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), in Indonesia's east, and one of the most impoverished parts of Indonesia, ranking third-lowest out of Indonesia's thirty-four provinces in its human development index score. Through the post-Suharto period, women's representation in NTT has been extremely low. Only one woman was elected to the DPR from NTT in the 2004 and 2009 elections: Anita Jacoba Gah, a member of the Demokrat Party with a background as a church activist. In 2014, Anita was defeated but she rejoined the DPR in 2016, replacing a member who had stepped down to become mayor of Kupang. Anita recontested her seat in 2019 and was elected. For the first time, so were two other women candidates, with the result that three of the thirteen DPR seats from NTT were won by women. The two newcomers to parliament were both wives of incumbent *bupati* (from Southwest Sumba and North Central Timor districts) and were nominated by Nasdem. Nasdem also nominated the wife of the governor of NTT, but she did not win the seat. (See also Bayo, 2021, who points out that in NTT's provincial DPRD, more women without dynastic pedigrees were elected.)

The result in North Maluku, another eastern Indonesian province, was even more dramatic. Here women won two of the three seats contested. They were the daughter of a former *bupati* (of West Halmahera), running for Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan*, PDI-P), and the sister of a former *bupati* (of Sula Archipelago) running for Golkar. North Maluku has a deeply patriarchal local political culture, but these were not the first women that the province had elected to the DPR. In each of the two previous elections, a woman with family connections to a local male politician had been elected: in 2009, this was the wife of a *bupati*; in 2014, it was the wife of the Sultan of Ternate. The number of women elected from North Maluku in 2019 thus doubled, but the underlying pattern remained consistent.

Another province in which numerous dynastic women ran for DPR seats was South Sulawesi, long a site of inter-dynastic competition. We identified fourteen candidates who were wives of district heads (i.e. mayors or *bupati*) or their deputies, standing for a number of parties. Given that the number of districts in South Sulawesi is only twenty-four, it seems legislative elections in this province are contests in which district heads

mobilise their own networks, with their wives standings as their proxies. Of course, these women also had to compete with powerful male candidates, among them male members of prominent local dynasties, party chiefs, and incumbent DPR members. In the end, women won five of the province's twenty-four seats; two of the victorious women were incumbents (one of whom was the wife of a former mayor, and the other was a former member of parliament in 2004–2009). The other three were won by first-timers, two of whom were wives of *bupati* and deputy *bupati* (Barru and Toraja Utara district), and one of whom was a businesswoman.

In the west of Indonesia, the province of West Sumatra experienced a breakthrough for women's representation in 2019, with this being the first post-Suharto election in which the province sent women to the DPR; it did so by electing three women (see Kabullah and Fajri, 2021). Each, however, had a dynastic connection: one was the wife of the governor (representing PKS), the second was the wife of a *bupati* (from the Nasdem Party), and the third was the daughter of a senior National Mandate Party (*Partai Amanat Nasional*, PAN) leader. South Sumatra was similar: five of the seventeen seats in this province were won by women; all five had family ties to local political elites. The daughter of the governor and the wife of a *bupati* were elected on the Nasdem ticket; the wife of a former mayor represented PDI-P; two others (from Gerindra and PAN) were related to senior party leaders.

The impact of women candidates in raising the vote totals of their parties was significant. Looking at data compiled by Puskapol, the vote share of all female DPR candidates was 22.45 per cent in 2009 and 23 per cent in 2014 (Puskapol, 2014). In 2019, according to the research institute Cakra Wikara Indonesia, it rose again to 24.1 (CWI, 2020). It is noteworthy that the ten candidates with the highest individual vote totals included several female dynastic candidates (Pusakapol UI, 2019). The DPR candidate with the highest personal vote was Puan Maharani, the daughter of PDI-P chairperson and former president, Megawati Sukarnoputri. Puan, at that time also serving as a minister, attained 404,304 votes, an increase from her 2014 vote total (also the highest in the country) of 369,000. Partly based on her massive personal vote, PDI-P managed to win four of the eight seats in her electoral district (Central Java V), up from two seats in 2014. Three other women candidates were also in the top ten of vote-getters. All three had dynastic connections: they were the older sister of the governor of North Sulawesi (PDI-P), the wife of the *bupati* of Ponorogo in East Java (Nasdem), and the wife of the *bupati* of Cilacap in Central Java (Golkar). These three all won seats for the first time.

One factor that has an effect on a candidate's likelihood of being elected is her or his position on the candidate list (Table 4). Candidates placed in the number one position have a greater chance of being elected, and parties tend to place individuals with special qualifications or connections in these positions (Wardani et al., 2013). They are mostly male candidates, incumbents, party leaders, and/or other powerful persons such as former regional heads. Only a few go to female candidates, and generally only if they have additional qualifications such as especially strong political networks or financial resources. Accordingly, women backed by powerful political dynasties tend to have greater bargaining power to attain these positions than other women candidates,

**Table 4.** Women Candidates Placed in Number One Position on Party List and Rates of Election in the 2019 Election.

| Party | Total candidates | Women candidates | Women candidates as percentage of all candidates | Women candidates placed in number one list position (as % of all women candidates) | Women candidates placed in number one list position elected (as % of number one placed women candidates) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PKB | 572 | 219 | 38.3 | 15 (6.9%) | 7 (47%) |
| Gerindra | 566 | 209 | 36.9 | 14 (6.7%) | 8 (57%) |
| PDI-P | 570 | 215 | 37.7 | 13 (6.0%) | 11 (85%) |
| Golkar | 571 | 216 | 37.8 | 12 (5.6%) | 11 (92%) |
| Nasdem | 571 | 221 | 38.7 | 19 (8.6%) | 5 (26%) |
| Garuda | 224 | 110 | 49.1 | 14 (12.7%) | – |
| Berkarya | 551 | 213 | 38.7 | 20 (9.4%) | – |
| PKS | 528 | 212 | 40.2 | 6 (2.8%) | 4 (67%) |
| Perindo | 565 | 221 | 39.1 | 16 (7.2%) | – |
| PPP | 551 | 233 | 42.3 | 15 (6.4%) | 3 (15%) |
| PSI | 571 | 274 | 48.0 | 17 (6.2%) | – |
| PAN | 571 | 218 | 38.2 | 14 (6.4%) | 6 (43%) |
| Hanura | 423 | 177 | 41.8 | 12 (6.8%) | – |
| Demokrat | 569 | 223 | 39.2 | 18 (8.2%) | 8 (44%) |
| PBB | 396 | 160 | 40.4 | 4 (2.5%) | – |
| PKPI | 135 | 76 | 56.3 | 26 (34.2%) | – |
| Total | 7,934 | 3,197 (40.3%) | | 235 (7.4%) | 63 (26.8%) |

*Source*: Data on candidate numbers from Perkumpulan untuk Demokrasi (Perludem) 2019; election rates calculated by the authors.
*Note*: PAN: *Partai Amanat Nasional* (National Mandate Party); PDI-P: *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan* (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle); PKB: *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (National Awakening Party); PKS: *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (Prosperous Justice Party); PPP: *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (United Development Party).

including those who already hold parliamentary seats. In particular, when the husband of the dynastic candidate is both regional head and head of the local party branch, he will be able to ensure his wife is placed in the top position. (This happened with the PKS in West Sumatra, Golkar in Gorontalo and Golkar in Banten – here the Golkar chief was deputy governor.)

These patterns were visible in the 2019 election. Of the 120 women candidates elected, 87 per cent were placed in one of the top three list positions, with more than half (sixty-three) elected from number one positions on candidate lists in their electoral districts (twenty-four were in number two positions, and seventeen in number three positions). Of those sixty-three, almost half (twenty-four) had dynastic connections. They included three women who were wives of regional government heads: the wife of the deputy governor of Banten, the wife of the governor of West Sulawesi (she was also an incumbent DPR member), and the wife of the governor of West Sumatra. Obviously, wives of regional heads did not always attain special treatment in the form of a number one list position (it will be recalled that fourteen such women were elected in 2019). Their husband's position in the party structure also counted: the husbands of all three of the women noted above were not only local government leaders, but they also held important posts in their parties – either as head of the provincial branch or of its election campaign board – and so had direct access to decision-making on candidacy.

What happened to "ordinary" female candidates in such circumstances? Women without dynastic connections, especially non-incumbents, generally lacked the bargaining power to attain number one positions on party lists and tended to be placed at the number three position or lower. Such women generally found it hard to win. They had to compete with male candidates placed at higher positions, who were often incumbents, former regional heads, and/or party leaders. They also often faced competition from women incumbents and/or dynastic candidates. Such less advantaged female candidates generally found it very difficult to attain enough votes to secure victory. Parties rarely win more than one or two seats per electoral district, making intra-party competition very fierce, and giving the decisive edge to candidates with strong political networks and material resources. In the end, most women candidates ended up helping their parties to meet the gender quota, while standing little realistic chance of being elected.

## Electoral Strategies of Political Parties: Incumbents versus Family Networks

The basis of recruitment of successful women candidates in Indonesia has narrowed over time, being ever more dominated by two groups: incumbents and members of political dynasties. The original goal of affirmative action was to open political access to all women, especially those with personal capacity, by enabling them to join political parties, take up the 30 per cent of nominations reserved for them and so gain entry to the very heart of the political system. Upon joining the parties, however, women found themselves dealing with political institutions with male-dominated patterns of behaviour and rules. Lacking a foundation of political equality within these parties, many women

who did not have the resources to compete were marginalised, sometimes leaving their parties altogether. On the other hand – within an overall context of continued masculine dominance – the system provided advantages to women able to accumulate the resources to compete.

One group of candidates relatively advantaged in this competition are incumbents. Incumbents enjoy resources that make them competitive: they have the time and funding needed to routinely visit constituents, they enjoy access to government programmes they can direct towards voters in their districts, and they have political experience and name recognition. DPR members are provided with five periods of "recess" time annually; on each occasion, they are supplied with around 100 million rupiah (US$7,300) to support them to visit and hold activities in their electoral districts. In effect, each year a DPR member accesses about 500 million rupiah (US$36,500) of state funding to carry out constituency work. They can also use their positions in the legislature to lobby the government to direct development programmes to their voters. In this context, parties look to their incumbents to defend their seat totals at election time. Almost all women incumbents in the DPR ran again in 2019 in the same electoral districts in which they were elected in 2014, and they were generally placed by their parties in the number one list position. Their re-election rates were reasonably high: of the ninety-three female incumbents in the DPR who ran for re-election, half (forty-six) were successful (sixteen of the forty-six had dynastic family connections).

However, incumbency was not enough to guarantee re-election, or even special treatment from the party. Because parties prioritise the goal of increasing their vote totals, they often end up placing (male or female) candidates with strong local political connections, including dynastic ones, in the same electoral districts as their female incumbents. As Hetifah Sjaifuddian, the head of the women's division in Golkar and a two-term member of the DPR, explained: "The parties always hope their incumbents will win, but they also have the target of increasing their seats. That is why parties tend to recruit candidates with family connections" (Interview, 24 May 2019). The result can threaten the seats held by women. The experience of Meuthya Hafidz, a Golkar incumbent running in North Sumatra, was revealing:

> The election this time was the toughest I have faced, because I had to run against the son of a *bupati* (Deli Serdang) who had served two terms in office, and who was being backed up by the bureaucratic structure and local government programs right down to the grassroots. Volunteers on my team were threatened, and told that they should not support me. This happened even though we were running for the same party. Fighting to defeat a political dynasty is really hard, especially in this case when the *bupati* had placed lots of their relatives in political posts, and when his uncle and aunt were members of the local parliament, though in different parties. (Interview, 28 May 2019)

In fact, Meuthya Hafidz succeeded in attaining the largest individual vote total among Golkar candidates in her electoral district, beating the *bupati*'s son (who was also a member of Medan city DPRD), and thus retained her seat. Even so, Meuthya's political

investment in her district through constituency service over the course of her term helped little. She had to spend more money on her campaign than years earlier, establishing a large team covering more territory down to the village level than previously.

Hetifah Sjaifuddian, running in East Kalimantan, faced a similar situation. Her main intra-party competitor was a male candidate who was the younger brother of a local mayor who had a background in the petroleum business. During her two terms in the DPR, Hetifah invested strongly in building relations with the grassroots leaders of the Golkar party in her electoral district, believing they would assist her both during the campaign and when monitoring the vote count on and after election day. However, as the election neared, her rival effectively "hijacked" the local party structure (by using money, it was suspected), despite all her efforts at cultivating it over preceding years. This forced Hetifah to change her strategy, and she instead tried to reach out to younger millennial voters, and to activate her connections with local governments by helping them access central government programmes. Like Meuthya, Hetifah managed to hang on to her seat, despite the challenge she faced from a male dynastic candidate.

Some women incumbents, however, lost as a result of this dynamic. This was the fate, for example, of Irma Chaniago, a leading member of the Nasdem party. As well as representing a South Sumatra electoral district in the DPR, she was on the party's national board and was the general chairperson of its women's wing. Before joining the party, Irma had a background in the labour movement, and was thus politically experienced and had a strong network among activists. In the 2019 election, her party gave her the additional responsibility of co-ordinating its election campaign in South Sumatra, and she was appointed as a national spokesperson for the Joko Widodo presidential campaign team. In short, the party relied on her to play an important leadership role. It recognised this fact by placing her first on its party list in the electoral district of South Sumatra II, but the party ran three other women below her in the list, including the daughter of the provincial governor, the daughter of the deputy governor, and the wife of a *bupati*. The party was obviously trying to boost the number of seats it obtained in the province from the one Irma had gained in 2014, and it was doing so by recruiting from political families. As Irma explained:

> The party was scared of the 4 per cent electoral threshold and so used whatever strategies it could to get over the line. Nasdem recruited any candidate who had the potential to win a seat, which didn't just mean financial resources – a strong family network was also important. Moreover, feudalism is still strong in South Sumatra. So I was fighting to beat them, and the party promised it would help me. Throughout my time as a DPR member, I consistently visited my electoral district, and helped my constituents whenever they came and contacted me. I thought that would be something I could rely on, something I could use to build up my vote. But the competition was tough. One candidate, the wife of a *bupati*, I hear had prepared 12 billion rupiah (US $ 877,000). Seeing what that fight was going to be like, I didn't want to join in and spread money around. I couldn't afford it. (Interview, 29 May 2019)

Irma lost her seat, but two of the women nominated by Nasdem – the governor's daughter and the wife of a *bupati* – picked up seats. Nasdem's strategy of trying to increase its seat total succeeded, but at the expense of one of its most effective, vocal, and high-performing female cadres in the DPR.

PDI-P also adopted the strategy of running dynastic women candidates against its own female incumbents. When the party renominated Mercy Barends, one of its DPR members from Maluku, it also ran the wives of a *bupati* and a deputy *bupati* in the same electoral district. The party's candidate list in Maluku was interesting. With four seats up for grabs, the party nominated three women and only one man, with the women in positions one, two, and four on the list. Competition among candidates in Maluku was intense. Mercy was not only competing with these co-partisan candidates, but other parties were also running popular local figures with strong networks. The fact that Maluku is an archipelago made it very difficult to reach voters. The result was that the four Maluku seats went to four different parties. Mercy was the only incumbent who managed to retain her seat. The other three were won by newcomers, two men (from Nasdem and Gerindra), and one woman (PKS).

The electoral strategy pursued by parties, involving recruitment of candidates supported by strong political and economic resources at the local level, unavoidably generated competition among female candidates, whether from the same or different parties. On the one hand, this strategy, by elevating locally networked candidates, has the positive effect of narrowing the gap between representatives and voters at the community level. On the other hand, it reduces the likelihood of incumbent female party cadres, with the skills and experience needed to play a role at the national level, successfully defending their seats. Certainly, that seems to be the lesson drawn by several incumbents we encountered during our research. The problem is not that these female incumbents themselves lacked experience or resources. It is rather that they did not face equally matched individual candidates, but rather had to compete with well-established family networks that were able to draw on the collective resources, experiences, networks, and political influence of an entire family network, often accumulated over long periods of entrenchment in local office and through multiple rounds of elections for both executive and legislative positions. Dynastic candidates are typically able to mobilise highly organised and motivated networks of supporters who have worked for the family before, and have been rewarded by it (Wardani, 2018). Campaign workers, vote brokers, and local notables who are tied to an influential local strongman (or woman) will typically support that leader's relatives if they also compete electorally. Local dynasties are, in short, often able to build lasting political loyalties at the grassroots, making their candidates formidable competitors.

Parties tend to support women candidates from these local dynasties in conditions in which central party leaders have already cultivated close ties with the dynastic heads, having often previously backed them in local executive races. The recruitment of female legislative candidates, in other words, is often simply a by-product of earlier party support for (male) candidates in local government-head elections. This was the obvious pattern with Nasdem – the party that nominated the highest number of wives of regional

government heads. According to Rumiyati, the head of the women's wing of the party (Interview, 29 May 2019), these wives often ran for legislative seats as a way for their husbands to repay the party for supporting them at the preceding local election without charging them *mahar* (a "dowry" – a term that is widely used to describe the cash payments candidates give parties in exchange for nominating them). While the parties thus use these families to boost their vote totals, the families in turn use the parties as convenient vehicles through which they can conquer political office at both the local and national level. Indeed, families frequently do not back just one party, but instead run family members through various parties, spreading their risk and expanding their networks.

It should be acknowledged that the parties have faced increasingly tough challenges in maintaining their seats in national parliament, as a result of changing electoral rules. The parliamentary threshold was first set at 2.5 per cent in 2009, at a time when there were still twelve parties in the DPR. The threshold rose to 3.5 per cent in 2014, leading to a reduction of the number of parties in the DPR to ten. In 2019, the threshold rose again to 4 per cent, and the number of parties in the DPR fell to nine. Raising the parliamentary threshold has been effective at reducing the number of parties in parliament, a goal nurtured by those who wanted to build a strong presidency by simplifying the party system. One unintended consequence, however, has been that party leaders have to think very strategically about the candidates they recruit in the regions.

The result is that, when it comes to women candidates, pragmatism tends to trump ideology or party-building. Rather than choosing candidates who are party cadres, party leaders tend to look for candidates who have strong grassroots networks and appeal at the local level. As we have seen, candidates with dynastic connections often fit the bill. In some cases, their power to attract votes is such that they can boost the party total in a given electoral district, allowing other candidates to gain seats on their coat-tails. The most famous example is the PDI-P's Puan Maharani, daughter of party leader Megawati Seokarnoputri, who was able in 2019 to win more than 400,000 votes in her electoral district, contributing four of the eight seats her party won there.

We are now in a position to return to the argument made by Folke et al. (2021). It will be recalled that they primarily attribute the rise of dynastic female candidates after the opening of a political system to informational problems confronting party selectors. The dynamic we have been describing in Indonesia appears different. It might be expected that party selectors would tend to favour the women candidates they know best – incumbents – and they often do so, by placing them high on party lists. Even so, advantages tend to accrue to dynastic candidates. Women with dynastic backgrounds are primarily advantaged not because of information, but due to the political connections, strong networks, and financial resources conferred on them by their families' entrenchment in local political power structures. It is, in short, the largely clientelistic nature of political competition, and the advantages this confers to well-networked and resourced candidates, that explains the advantages of dynastic candidates. At the same time, we should acknowledge that the growing dominance of dynastic candidates is likely to exacerbate, rather than reduce over time, informational problems within parties, precisely because

these candidates are themselves largely recruited – by male-dominated party elites – through processes that lack transparency.

When parties provide women with local dynastic ties to positions at the top of their party lists in a given electorate, in recognition of their power to attract votes, it is a distortion of affirmative action principles. These are very often precisely the women who do *not* need to benefit from affirmative action policies, unlike their own party cadres who lack local strength while having dedicated themselves to their parties. Instead, parties are using affirmative action to reward dynasts for their willingness to stand for election on their party lists. Even so, we should recognise that these dynastic candidates themselves might not be steering the process. Very often, the political deal is not struck between the party and the candidate concerned, but between the party and the male head of the family. Men are typically the key actors behind the rise of dynastic female candidates. Certainly, the election of fifteen wives of serving regional heads and deputy regional heads points to such a conclusion, as does qualitative evidence that the husbands were sometimes the key decision makers in these candidacies (see Kabullah and Fajri, 2021). Viewed in this light, both the female party cadres and the dynastic women candidates similarly lack significant political bargaining power, and are both – albeit in different ways – victims of pragmatic deals made by male political elites.

## Conclusion: Do Numbers Still Matter?

The rise of dynastic female candidates in Indonesia has reopened a classic question: Is it the quantity of women representatives that counts, or their quality? The criticism of the dynastic candidates advanced through this article is that these women have entered the political process without going through the normal stages of party recruitment and training, and as a result have cut off the careers of promising female party cadres, many of whom had slowly been building up their political profiles. This is a critique that focuses on candidate *quality*. But that is a critique that is not easily addressed by traditional arguments in favour of a gender quota, which is quintessentially an instrument aimed at increasing the *quantity* of women representatives, with the assumption that the resulting "politics of presence" will produce changes in institutional behaviour and policy outcomes favouring women. Advocates of gender quotas have long argued that this form of affirmative action would not only provide women with a level playing field, but also with opportunities to learn and gain the skills needed to become effective politicians.

The experience of fifteen years of gender quotas in Indonesia between 2004 and 2019 brings this sequence into question. It is certainly true that quotas have begun to have an effect in terms of quantity, with 40 per cent of candidates now being women. But the backgrounds of these candidates have begun to shift. Early in the period, between 2004 and 2009, most women recruited as candidates, and who went on to win seats in parliament, were party cadres. Not coincidentally, many of these women MPs then went on to play a role in the 2004–2009 DPR, helping to draft and pass a number of laws that promoted the interests of women, such as a law on human trafficking in 2007 (the chair of the drafting committee was a woman), a law on citizenship in 2006 (which eliminated

ethnic discrimination and guaranteed gender equity), and revisions to electoral laws, which strengthened the gender quota itself. In subsequent years, far fewer progressive laws were passed by the DPR.

As time passed, the nature of female representation also began to change. As we have shown through this article, the proportion of women with dynastic connections has increased rather than decreased over time, contrary to the predictions of Folke et al. (2021), and indicating the importance of local networks and financial resources in Indonesian politics (to be sure, the time frame may be too short to pronounce definitively yet, but so far the trends are pointing towards greater not less dynastic politics). At the same time, more than half of women parliamentarians were not re-elected (39 per cent were re-elected in 2014, 38.6 per cent in 2019), including many with track records of legislative achievement. Part of the problem is that the gender quota is being implemented without being backed up by any systematic attempt within the parties to support female cadres who have the capacity or potential to truly represent women or other marginalised groups. In particular, no party has put in place a distinctive recruitment standard or process for women candidates; nor has any party produced any policy outlining an affirmative action programme to promote female candidates within the party.

Candidate recruitment is critical in shaping women's political representation. Without the parties paying greater attention to the quality of the female candidates they recruit, the increase in the quantity of women in Indonesia's national parliament will have little substantive impact on the nature of women's political representation. The country has now gone through three electoral cycles with open-list proportional representation and though the number of women in parliament has slowly increased, women have been quite unable to change the basic power relations within parliament and other political institutions. Elected women representatives have been unable to defend themselves against their own parties, when their parties have turned to dynastic candidates.

It can be concluded that we are witnessing the beginning of stagnation in political representation of women in Indonesia, despite the increase in the number of female representatives, and despite the gender quota. Experience is showing that, rather than being forced by the quota to overcome gender biases, the parties are adapting to the quota and using it in ways that further their own electoral goals without improving the quality of female representation. 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. Many of the women candidates elected under the quota come from powerful families and are not the sort of women who need affirmative action; they have access to the resources and networks needed to compete freely in the electoral process. Affirmative action is supposed to help structurally weak groups that have been subject to histories of discrimination, with the goal of providing all actors with the same starting point; its purpose is not to assist those who enjoy structural advantages. While we believe the gender quota is still needed, we also see the need for stronger intervention in the parties to ensure that they pursue strategies promoting gender equality, provide more internal leadership roles to women, and recruit female candidates based on their capacities and

potential to contribute to advancing the goal of greater equality, rather than simply on the basis of their resources and networks.

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## Notes

1. We interviewed six female party activists from three parties. Four of them were incumbent DPR members and party officeholders; three were competing against male and female dynastic candidates (two were elected, one was not). The other informants were female party officer holders who had run for DPR seats more than once but not been elected.
2. We should explain a little more about our data collection. We compiled data from media and other online sources about the backgrounds of all elected DPR members, but in most cases were not able to check directly with DPR members about their family backgrounds. However, the Indonesian media reports extensively on DPR members' family backgrounds, especially their dynastic connections. While we are therefore confident about the overall pattern revealed by our data, we cannot rule out that the data collection effort may have missed a small number of family connections that were not reported in the media.
3. Of the fifteen wives of regional heads elected, four came from Sumatra (North Sumatra, West Sumatra, South Sumatra), four from Sulawesi (Gorontalo, West Sulawesi, South Sulawesi), three from Java (Banten, Central Java, East Java); two from Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), one from West Kalimantan, and one from Central Kalimantan.

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