

Party Dynasty: A Case Study of Nepotism in the Upper Echelons of Party Leadership

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The phenomenon of political dynasties within Indonesian political parties reflects the strengthening of internal oligarchies and the weakening of party democratization. This study aims to analyze the practices of nepotism and family-based power reproduction within major political parties during the 2021–2025 period. Using a qualitative approach and a case study method, this research examines the forms of structural position inheritance, kinship-based recruitment mechanisms, and their impacts on the quality of democracy. Data were collected through literature reviews, legal document analysis, and academic studies related to political dynasties. The findings indicate that approximately 23.8 percent of members of the House of Representatives elected in the 2024 General Election have kinship ties with previous political figures, highlighting the dominance of patrimonial and patronage-based practices within major parties. The main factors driving political dynasties include efforts by incumbent elites to preserve power, the formation of exclusive groups, and restrictions on access to strategic positions for political actors outside the ruling families. This condition undermines meritocracy, contributes to internal democratic deficits, and increases the risks of nepotism and corruption. The study concludes that political party reform is urgently needed to establish transparent and competence-based recruitment and succession systems.

Keywords: Political Dynasty, Nepotism, Party Oligarchy, Internal Democracy.

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1. Introduction

The phenomenon of political dynasties commonly referred to as dynastic politics has become a significant issue in political dynamics across many countries, including Indonesia. This issue is highly prevalent within Indonesian society and has even evolved into a form of political culture. Dynastic politics refers to the inheritance of political power that is often maintained within certain families, thereby producing a structure of authority that is closed and concentrated within a single familial lineage. Conceptually, party dynasties can be understood as the process of reproducing political power in a hereditary manner within the internal structure of political parties as well as within the context of nominations for public office. Within political parties, this phenomenon is frequently associated with the practice of nepotism, namely the appointment or placement of individuals in strategic positions based on kinship ties or personal closeness rather than on competence or merit. Both practices generate significant negative consequences for democratic systems and for the realization of clean and accountable governance.

Within the organizational structure of political parties in Indonesia, the concentration of power within families has become a phenomenon that cannot be overlooked. Many strategic positions within parties are occupied by members of the immediate family or close relatives of party leaders, thereby creating a consolidation of authority within specific family circles. This can be observed in several major parties where relatives of key party officials occupy important positions without undergoing open and

transparent cadre development processes. Such a phenomenon reflects that political power is no longer solely the result of open competition, but rather a familial legacy that is systematically preserved within party structures (Saebani & Mubarok, 2024).

In many major political parties in Indonesia, strategic positions in party leadership are frequently filled by close relatives of party elites. This situation does not occur solely because of capability or competence, but also as a manifestation of reciprocal political loyalty and the strengthening of familial power networks. Patronage encourages the unequal distribution of political and economic resources, concentrating them within particular groups that possess privileged access, including in the appointment of party officials (Rosyan & Prasojo, 2024).

Dynastic politics represents a contemporary political dynamic and has often become a subject of debate in the public sphere. The negative impacts of family dominance and patronage culture in party leadership are particularly evident in the quality of democracy and political leadership. Nepotism restricts opportunities for leadership regeneration within parties and hinders the emergence of qualified cadres who are independent of family influence. This practice is frequently viewed as a limitation on individuals' political rights to express their political preferences according to their conscience. Consequently, it leads to distortions in political decision-making processes, as familial loyalty is prioritized over public accountability and the broader interests of society. Moreover, such practices weaken public trust in political parties as open and responsive democratic institutions. They also risk fostering apathy among citizens and reducing political participation. The strengthening of family-based oligarchies within parties may further create patterns of power monopoly that contribute to poor party governance and the persistence of corrupt practices (Tempo, 2020).

This phenomenon clearly threatens the fundamental principles of democracy, which emphasize fair competition, transparency, and clean governance. Therefore, this study focuses on examining the practice of nepotism within the upper leadership of political parties as a concrete manifestation of family dominance, kinship culture, and patronage networks, as well as the various negative impacts these practices generate for democracy and the quality of political leadership in Indonesia.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method to examine in depth the practice of nepotism within the upper leadership structures of political parties in Indonesia. This approach is chosen in order to capture the socio-political context and the underlying meanings behind the reproduction of family-based power within party structures. The research location focuses on one major political party that shows strong indications of dynastic political practices. The research subjects include senior party officials with kinship relations, party cadres, and competent political observers.

Data collection was conducted through secondary data in the form of literature studies and document analysis, including laws, government regulations, court decisions, and scholarly literature from scientific journals indexed in Scopus and Sinta. Primary legal sources, such as the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and various laws related to regional governance, were used to provide a comprehensive understanding of the regulatory framework surrounding political dynasties.

In addition, this study also utilizes several academic articles that discuss the phenomenon of political dynasties and political recruitment within parties, including:

1. Fitriyah (2020), in the article "Political Parties, Political Recruitment, and the Formation of Political Dynasties in Regional Elections" published in *Jurnal Politika Universitas Diponegoro*, which explains

that weak political recruitment mechanisms within parties often create opportunities for the emergence of political dynasties.

2. Agus Dedi (2019), in the article “Dynastic Politics from a Democratic Perspective” published in *Jurnal Moderat*, which examines how political power tends to concentrate within certain family groups, thereby generating nepotistic practices within the political system.
3. Djoni Gunanto (2020), in the article “A Critical Review of Dynastic Politics in Indonesia” published in *Jurnal Sawala*, which highlights the dominance of party elites and political oligarchies as key factors contributing to the development of dynastic politics.
4. Amriyono Prakoso and Meidi Kosandi (2022), in the article “Dynastic Politics in the Selection of Legislative Candidates” published in *Syntax Literate*, which demonstrates that candidate selection processes within political parties are often influenced by family-based power networks.

These articles were selected because they are directly relevant to the research topic and originate from scientific journals indexed in Sinta and other academic databases, thereby providing strong theoretical and empirical foundations for understanding the phenomenon of nepotism within political parties.

The data were analyzed using a qualitative method with a deductive approach, in which legal data and scholarly literature were systematically examined to evaluate the implementation of existing norms and to identify regulatory gaps that enable the persistence of dynastic politics.

Data accuracy was tested through source triangulation and member checking techniques to ensure the credibility and validity of the research findings. This study also upholds ethical principles by maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of informants and ensuring that participation is based on voluntary consent.

Based on these stages, the author conducted a review of the selected articles. Therefore, an analysis was carried out to identify the key findings within the selected literature by synthesizing conclusions and identifying the common threads among them.

3. Results and Discussion

Research Findings

The Consolidation of Party Dynasties within the Leadership Structure of Political Parties

The phenomenon of party dynasties in Indonesia during the 2021–2025 period demonstrates a strengthening of internal oligarchic tendencies within major national political parties. A party dynasty can be understood as the practice of inheriting structural positions within a political party by individuals who have familial ties with the party’s founding elites or leadership. This condition reflects a form of power personalization while simultaneously indicating the weakness of institutionalization and internal democratization within Indonesian political parties.

In the context of the 2024 general election, several studies indicate that major parties such as Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP), Partai Golkar, Partai Gerindra, Partai Demokrat, dan Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN) have become the primary arenas for the emergence of party dynasties. Research conducted by Pusat Penelitian Politik LIPI (2022) and PolGov Universitas Gadjah Mada (2023) indicates that most political parties in Indonesia still operate within a patrimonialistic pattern, in which mechanisms of cadre recruitment, legislative candidate selection, and the election of party leaders are strongly influenced by familial relationships among political elites.

This phenomenon is evident at the level of national party leadership, where several strategic positions are inherited genealogically. For instance, within the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP),

Megawati Soekarnoputri as party chairperson has placed Puan Maharani—her biological daughter—in important positions both within the party and in the national legislative institution. A similar pattern can also be observed in the Partai Demokrat, where Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono succeeded his father, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, as party chairperson. In the Partai Gerindra, Prabowo Subianto continues to maintain a leadership control pattern that remains highly centralized within his political family circle (Kompas.id, 2024).

The Distribution of Political Dynasties in the House of Representatives (DPR)

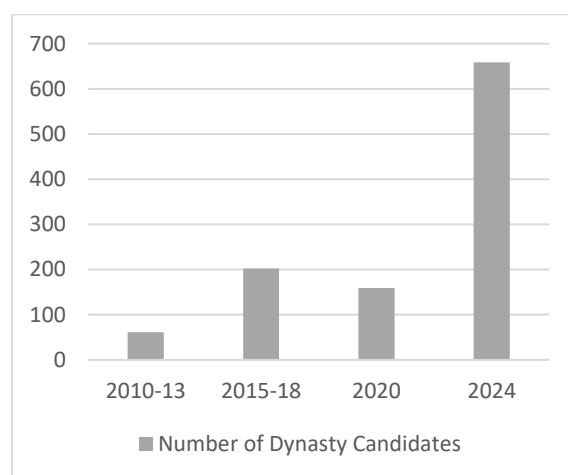


Figure 1. Distribution of Members of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI) in the 2024 Election Based on Political Dynasty Ties
Source: BRIN Public Relations (2025).

The Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) released the findings of a study on building a more inclusive parliament for youth and women. The study indicates that the proportion of members of the House of Representatives elected in the 2024 general election who are connected to political dynasties is relatively significant. Out of a total of 580 elected legislators, 138 individuals—or approximately 23.8 percent—were recorded as having familial ties with political figures who had previously held positions of power. When these data are analyzed further based on political party affiliation, it becomes evident that several parties exhibit levels of dynastic involvement that exceed the national average (CSIS, 2024).

In addition, the Forum Masyarakat Peduli Parlemen Indonesia (Formappi) reported that 79 out of the 580 members of the People's Representative Council have familial relationships with other public officials. This figure does not yet include more in-depth tracing, such as professional background, involvement in the same projects, or more distant family relations.

Discussion

The Reproduction of Family Power within Political Parties

The phenomenon of political dynasties within political parties can be understood as a form of the reproduction of family power within political organizational structures. This perspective is consistent with the view of Agus Dedi (2019) in the article “Dynastic Politics from a Democratic Perspective,” which argues that dynastic politics emerges when political power becomes concentrated within particular family groups. Such conditions give rise to nepotistic practices within the political system, as positions of authority tend to be inherited by family members.

Political Recruitment and Party Cadreization

One of the factors that strengthens the practice of political dynasties is the weakness of recruitment and cadreization systems within political parties. According to Fitriyah (2020), political recruitment processes within parties are often not based on mechanisms of open competition but are instead influenced by personal relationships with party elites. As a result, party cadres who have familial ties with party elites tend to have greater opportunities to obtain strategic positions.

Party Oligarchy and the Weakness of Internal Democracy

The dominance of party elites is also a crucial factor in sustaining the practice of political dynasties. Djoni Gunanto (2020) explains that many political parties in Indonesia still operate under a pattern of political oligarchy, in which organizational power is concentrated in the hands of a small number of party elites. Under such conditions, political decision-making processes often fail to involve party cadres in a broad and participatory manner.

The Impact of Political Dynasties on Democracy

The persistence of political dynasties within political parties has significant implications for the quality of democracy. Such practices can undermine the principle of meritocracy within the political system, as access to political office becomes more readily available to individuals who possess familial ties with party elites.

Furthermore, the dominance of political dynasties may also narrow the space for broader public political participation while simultaneously reinforcing nepotistic practices in political decision-making processes. If this condition continues, internal democracy within Indonesian political parties will likely become increasingly weakened and may hinder the healthy regeneration of political leadership. Therefore, the phenomenon of party dynasties indicates that institutional reform within political parties remains a critical challenge in efforts to strengthen democratic governance in Indonesia.

Political Capital in the Reproduction of Political Dynasties

Economic capital is also a crucial factor. Legislative campaign processes have long been associated with various activities aimed at introducing candidates to the public, all of which inevitably require substantial financial resources. Consequently, financial capacity often determines the extent to which a candidate can reach potential voters.

Arga argues that the strengthening of political dynasty practices within legislative institutions has the potential to persist over time. This condition not only creates exclusivity within the political sphere but also diminishes the quality of public representation in parliament.

From a constitutional perspective, Arga emphasizes that Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections does not provide explicit restrictions regarding prohibitions on legislative candidates who have familial ties with other public officials. He notes that similar provisions were once included in Article 7 of Law Number 8 of 2015 on Regional Head Elections; however, the political dynamics at that time resulted in the regulation being unsustainable. (Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2024)

The increasing prevalence of dynastic politics demonstrates a significant upward trend between 2015 and 2020. In 2015, only 52 regional head candidates were recorded as having familial ties with incumbents. By 2020, this number had surged to 158 candidates affiliated with political elites. One of the regions with the highest concentration of dynastic politics in the 2020 regional elections was South Sulawesi Province. (Farida Azzahra, 2022). These facts indicate that political parties in Indonesia tend to

function as political family enterprises that preserve power through genealogical rather than meritocratic mechanisms.

Looking back to the 1990s, particularly the Reformasi Era of 1998, Indonesia embarked on a path toward democratization through the implementation of free elections and the establishment of a multi-party system. However, this democratic trajectory—now spanning more than two decades—faces serious challenges, one of which is the strengthening phenomenon of political dynasties. Political dynasties refer to practices in which political power—whether in the form of elected offices or positions within political parties—is concentrated and transmitted to individuals who have familial ties (either by blood or marriage) to elites who currently hold or have previously held power (R. W. Liddle, 2017).

This phenomenon became increasingly pronounced following the Constitutional Court Decision Number 33/PUU-XIII/2015, which annulled restrictions on conflicts of interest for relatives of incumbents seeking to run in regional elections. This ruling is widely regarded as having effectively paved the way for the expansion of political dynasties at the local level, thereby further consolidating their influence within party structures.

Factors Contributing to the Emergence of Political Dynasties

Based on the results of the analysis conducted through observations of social and political phenomena, a clear picture emerges that the causes of the emergence of political dynasties are as follows: (Dedi, 2022, hlm. 99):

1. Efforts to preserve power by incumbent political actors constitute a form of elite reproduction aimed at maintaining dominance within existing political structures. This strategy is carried out through various mechanisms, both formal and informal, to ensure that control over power remains under their influence as well as that of their family members. Such practices reflect a tendency toward political patrimonialism, in which loyalty and positions of power are reproduced through kinship ties and familial networks.
2. Efforts to conceal leadership weaknesses are often manifested through the formation of organized groups that systematically design internal succession processes. This strategy aims to maintain control of power within the family circle while preventing the public exposure of previous leadership weaknesses or failures.
3. Efforts to build political power are directed toward ensuring the continuity of authority, securing political legitimacy, and maintaining long-term stability of influence. Thus, the construction of political power is not merely an electoral endeavor, but also constitutes a form of long-term power investment that reinforces the position of political actors within social and governmental structures.
4. Efforts to restrict access of external actors to positions of power are often manifested through systematically designed political strategies. This practice reflects a form of exclusivity within power structures, in which political networks seek to maintain dominance by constructing closed alliances that accommodate only individuals from particular familial circles. Consequently, opportunities for political actors outside such kinship ties to enter and participate in the power structure become highly limited.

Implications of Political Dynasties for Democracy

The political consequences of this phenomenon are highly complex. Political dynasties contribute to a democratic deficit by undermining the principle of meritocracy, narrowing the space for political participation, and increasing the risks of nepotism and corruption (Aspinall, 2017; Adam et al., 2020).

In response, the Indonesian government has attempted to mitigate the impact of political dynasties through a number of regulatory measures. For instance, term limits for regional heads and public officials

are designed to prevent the concentration of power. In addition, the implementation of stricter regulations concerning conflicts of interest is expected to curb unethical political practices.

Nevertheless, these regulatory efforts have not been entirely successful in reducing the prevalence of political dynasties. Many influential families remain capable of maintaining their dominance through informal channels or by leveraging deeply entrenched political power (FH Esa Unggul, 2024). Thus, the legitimacy of Indonesia's current political system is increasingly under threat due to the dominance of family-based oligarchies, which tend to restrict inclusive and responsive political participation.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research and discussion conducted, it can be concluded that the practice of nepotism and the reproduction of family power within the management of major political parties in Indonesia during the 2021–2025 period indicates a tendency to strengthen political dynasties within the party's internal structure. This phenomenon is evident in the dominance of elite families in strategic party positions and the significant involvement of legislative members with kinship ties to influential political figures. These practices are inseparable from the weakness of party recruitment and cadre formation mechanisms, which remain elitist, the dominance of oligarchs within party leadership structures, and the social, political, and economic capital possessed by candidates from political families. Furthermore, limited regulations that strictly limit kinship-based conflicts of interest also open up space for the continuation of political dynasties. This condition has implications for weakening internal party democracy and has the potential to hinder the principle of meritocracy in the political system, so that political parties tend to function as political family enterprises that maintain power through genealogical mechanisms.

This study has certain limitations, as it relies solely on a literature review and document analysis without incorporating direct interviews with party elites or cadres as primary data sources. Therefore, future research is recommended to adopt more in-depth empirical approaches, such as field studies or interviews with relevant political actors, in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of internal party dynamics and the practices of nepotism. Moreover, subsequent studies may expand the scope of analysis by comparing the practices of political dynasties across different parties or regions in Indonesia, thereby identifying variations in patterns of familial power reproduction within the national political system. In doing so, research on political dynasties will not only contribute to academic discourse but also serve as a foundation for policy formulation aimed at strengthening internal democracy within political parties in Indonesia.

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