

Political Dynasty Formation and Democratic Consolidation in West Java: A Comparative Study of Banten, Tasikmalaya, and Cirebon

Sri Dewi Miladiyah

Universitas Islam Negeri Syekh Nurjati, Indonesia

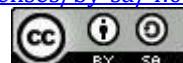
Corresponding Author: sridewimiladiyah99@mail.uinssc.ac.id

Article Info :	ABSTRACT
Accepted: 15-07-2025	Political dynasties in Indonesia have significantly influenced the consolidation of democracy, particularly in the context of decentralization. This study examines the formation and impact of political dynasties in three regions of West Java: Banten, Tasikmalaya, and Cirebon, from 2005 to 2024. The research aims to understand how dynastic politics has shaped democratic quality indicators such as electoral competitiveness, institutional accountability, and civil liberties. A qualitative comparative case study approach was employed, combining process tracing and structured focused comparison. Key findings reveal that while political dynasties have systematically reduced electoral competition, they have also led to varying outcomes in democratic consolidation. Banten's dynastic collapse resulted in democratic recovery, while Cirebon's consolidating dynasty and Tasikmalaya's traditional elite system showed differing levels of democratic erosion. The study highlights the role of external accountability mechanisms, particularly national anti-corruption agencies, in curbing dynastic power. It concludes that strengthening local democratic institutions, improving electoral system competitiveness, and fostering civil society are crucial for mitigating the negative effects of political dynasties on democratic consolidation. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between political dynasties and democratic governance in decentralized systems. These findings have critical policy implications for democratic reform initiatives in Indonesia and other decentralized democracies, emphasizing the need for multi-level governance frameworks that balance local autonomy with robust accountability mechanisms.
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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of political dynasties has emerged as one of the most contentious issues in contemporary democratic governance worldwide, challenging the foundational principles of equal political opportunity and meritocratic leadership selection (Bin, 2024; Maharani et al., 2024; Syauket & Lestiyani, 2024; Zheng, 2025). Political dynasties, defined as families that maintain political power across multiple generations through electoral

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mechanisms, have become increasingly prevalent in both established and emerging democracies (DAL BÓ et al., 2009; Syauket & Lestiyani, 2024; Wiratraman, 2025). According to data from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), approximately 40% of parliamentary seats in developing democracies are occupied by members of political families, raising concerns about the quality of democratic representation and governance (Mendoza et al., 2012). This concentration of political power within familial networks has been observed across diverse political systems, from the Philippines and India to Argentina and the United States, suggesting a systematic pattern that transcends cultural and institutional boundaries (DAL BÓ et al., 2009; Querubin, 2016). The persistence of dynastic politics poses fundamental questions about democratic consolidation, particularly in post-authoritarian contexts where institutional frameworks remain fragile and susceptible to elite capture.

In Indonesia, the decentralization reforms initiated through Laws No. 22/1999 and No. 25/1999, followed by their revisions in Laws No. 32/2004 and No. 33/2004, have created unprecedented opportunities for local political elite formation and consolidation. Research by Aspinall & Berenschot (2019) demonstrates that Indonesia's transition to direct local elections (Pilkada) in 2005 has paradoxically strengthened rather than weakened dynastic networks, with an estimated 71 out of 524 districts and cities experiencing dynastic succession between 2005 and 2017. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Home Affairs indicates that as of 2020, at least 25% of regional heads in Indonesia were members of political dynasties, either succeeding family members or being closely related to former regional leaders. This phenomenon has become particularly pronounced in Java, where historical power structures and dense patronage networks intersect with modern democratic institutions, creating hybrid governance systems that blend electoral competition with traditional elite dominance (Hadiz, 2010; Hadiz & Robison, 2004).

West Java Province presents a particularly compelling case for examining political dynasty formation and its implications for democratic consolidation, given its status as Indonesia's most populous province with significant economic and political influence. The province encompasses diverse political landscapes, from the highly urbanized and industrialized areas to traditional rural communities, each with distinct patterns of elite formation and political mobilization. Banten, which separated from West Java in 2000, has become notorious for the Ratu Atut Chosiyah dynasty, which dominated provincial politics for over two decades until being dismantled by corruption investigations in 2014. Research by Muhtadi (2015) reveals that the Chosiyah

family controlled not only the governorship but also numerous district-level positions, creating an extensive patronage network that penetrated bureaucratic, business, and judicial institutions. Similarly, Tasikmalaya and Cirebon have experienced the emergence and consolidation of local political dynasties, though with different trajectories, mechanisms, and outcomes that warrant systematic comparative analysis.

Existing scholarship on political dynasties in Indonesia has primarily focused on macro-level analyses of prevalence and general characteristics, with significant contributions from [Buehler \(2013\)](#), who examined the impact of direct local elections on dynasty formation, and [Hidayat \(2014\)](#), who analyzed the relationship between decentralization and local elite capture. [Aspinall & Berenschot \(2019\)](#) comprehensive study of democracy for sale in Indonesia provides crucial insights into the role of patronage networks and clientelism in sustaining dynastic power. More specifically, studies by [Fitriyah \(2020\)](#) on Banten's political dynasties and [Pratikno \(2009\)](#) on local strongmen have contributed to understanding regional variations in elite politics. International comparative research, such as [Querubin \(2016\)](#) analysis of political dynasties in the Philippines and [DAL BÓ et al. \(2009\)](#) examination of dynastic politics in the United States Congress, offers theoretical frameworks for understanding how family networks leverage political power across generations. However, these studies have largely treated political dynasties as a dependent variable, focusing on their formation and prevalence rather than their specific impacts on democratic quality and consolidation processes.

Despite the growing body of literature, a significant research gap exists in understanding the comparative mechanisms through which political dynasties affect democratic consolidation at the subnational level, particularly the variation in outcomes across different local contexts within the same provincial framework. Previous studies have not adequately addressed why some dynastic systems lead to relatively stable, if imperfect, governance arrangements while others result in democratic backsliding, institutional decay, and eventual collapse. The relationship between dynastic politics and specific dimensions of democratic consolidation including institutional accountability, electoral competitiveness, civil society autonomy, and rule of law—remains underexplored in the Indonesian context. Furthermore, there is insufficient comparative analysis of how different types of dynasties (based on their origins, resource bases, and governance strategies) produce varying effects on local democratic quality, and how contextual factors such as economic structure, civil society strength, and pre-existing power configurations mediate these relationships.

The urgency of this research is underscored by Indonesia's ongoing struggles with democratic quality and governance effectiveness at the local level, despite two decades of decentralization and democratization. The Indonesian Corruption Watch reported that between 2015 and 2020, over 120 regional heads were implicated in corruption cases, many of whom belonged to or enabled political dynasties through patron-client networks. The Constitutional Court's 2015 decision to allow close relatives of incumbent regional heads to run in elections, reversing a previous restriction, has potentially opened new pathways for dynasty expansion precisely when civil society organizations and reformists were calling for stronger anti-dynasty regulations. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated governance challenges, revealing how dynastic control over local resources and institutions can either facilitate or hinder effective crisis response. Understanding the mechanisms linking political dynasties to democratic consolidation outcomes is therefore critical for informing policy interventions aimed at strengthening Indonesia's democratic institutions and preventing further elite capture at crucial moments of institutional vulnerability.

This research offers significant novelty by developing a comparative analytical framework that examines political dynasty formation and democratic consolidation through a multi-dimensional lens, incorporating not only electoral and institutional factors but also the role of patronage networks, business interests, civil society resistance, and historical power configurations. Unlike previous studies that have treated West Java's political dynasties as discrete cases or grouped them into broad national patterns, this research employs systematic structured comparison of three distinct cases—Banten, Tasikmalaya, and Cirebon—to identify causal mechanisms and scope conditions that determine how dynastic politics affects democratic quality.

The study introduces an original typology of political dynasties based on their formation pathways (bureaucratic, business-based, or traditional elite origins), consolidation strategies (cooptation versus coercion), and institutional embeddedness, allowing for more nuanced analysis of dynasty-democracy relationships. Additionally, this research contributes methodological innovation by combining quantitative indicators of democratic quality with qualitative process tracing of specific dynasty formation and consolidation episodes, providing both breadth and depth in understanding these complex political phenomena.

The primary purpose of this research is to analyze and compare the processes of political dynasty formation in Banten, Tasikmalaya, and Cirebon, and to examine how these dynastic structures have affected democratic consolidation in each locality over the period from 2005 to 2024. Specifically,

the research aims to: identify the historical and structural conditions that enabled dynasty formation in each case; map the specific mechanisms through which dynastic families acquired, consolidated, and maintained political power; assess the impact of dynastic politics on key dimensions of democratic consolidation including electoral competitiveness, institutional accountability, civil liberties, and rule of law; analyze the role of resistance and countervailing forces including civil society organizations, media, anti-corruption agencies, and opposition political actors; and develop theoretical propositions about the conditions under which political dynasties are compatible or incompatible with democratic consolidation processes. By addressing these objectives, the research seeks to move beyond descriptive accounts of dynasty prevalence toward explanatory analysis of dynasty-democracy relationships in Indonesia's decentralized political system.

This research is expected to make substantial theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions to political science scholarship and democratic governance in Indonesia. Theoretically, the study will contribute to debates on democratic consolidation in post-authoritarian contexts by specifying how elite continuity and transformation affect the institutionalization of democratic practices and norms. It will extend theories of clientelism and patronage politics by examining how these informal institutions interact with formal democratic mechanisms at the subnational level, potentially offering insights applicable beyond Indonesia to other decentralized democracies in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. Empirically, the research will provide the first systematic comparative analysis of political dynasties in West Java, generating detailed case studies and original data on dynasty formation, operation, and impact that will serve as valuable resources for future research. The study will also produce quantifiable indicators of democratic quality at the district and provincial levels, contributing to the broader effort to measure and monitor subnational democratic performance in Indonesia.

The practical implications of this research extend to multiple stakeholder groups concerned with improving democratic governance in Indonesia. For policymakers and legislators, the findings will inform debates on electoral reform, anti-dynasty regulations, and institutional design aimed at preventing elite capture while maintaining democratic legitimacy and political stability.

The research will provide evidence-based recommendations on which institutional safeguards are most effective in constraining dynastic power without undermining democratic processes, and under what conditions restrictive measures may be counterproductive. For civil society organizations, media, and anti-corruption agencies, the study will offer strategic insights into the vulnerabilities and pressure points within dynastic

systems, identifying opportunities for effective advocacy, monitoring, and accountability efforts. For international development partners and democracy assistance organizations, the research will contribute to understanding how external support can most effectively strengthen democratic institutions in contexts where power is concentrated within familial networks. Ultimately, by illuminating the complex relationships between political dynasties and democratic consolidation, this research aims to contribute to the broader project of building more accountable, inclusive, and resilient democratic governance in Indonesia and similar developing democracies facing challenges of elite capture and institutional weakness.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative comparative case study design with mixed-methods data collection to examine political dynasty formation and democratic consolidation in West Java. The research adopts a multiple case study approach following [Yin \(2018\)](#) methodological framework, treating Banten, Tasikmalaya, and Cirebon as embedded cases within the broader West Java political context. The study utilizes process tracing and structured focused comparison techniques ([George & Bennett, 2005](#)) to identify causal mechanisms linking dynasty formation to democratic outcomes across the three cases. The research population consists of all political actors, institutions, and processes related to local governance and electoral politics in the three regions from 2005 to 2024, including regional heads (governors, mayors, and regents), legislative members, political party officials, bureaucrats, civil society activists, journalists, and voters who have participated in local electoral processes during this period.

The sample is purposively selected to include key informants who possess direct knowledge and experience with political dynasty formation and operation in each locality. The sampling technique combines maximum variation sampling to capture diverse perspectives across different actor categories, and snowball sampling to identify additional informants particularly within elite networks and informal power structures. The primary sample includes approximately 60-75 key informants (determined through theoretical saturation, where data collection continues until no new themes emerge from interviews, typically achieved at 15-20 informants per case in qualitative research) distributed across the sampling involves documentary analysis of electoral data, legislative records, court documents, media reports, and civil society publications covering all electoral cycles and major governance episodes in each region during the study period.

The research instruments consist of semi-structured interview protocols with tailored question guides for different informant categories, designed to elicit information on dynasty formation pathways, power consolidation mechanisms, patronage networks, institutional practices, and democratic quality indicators. The interview protocols are developed based on theoretical frameworks from [Aspinall & Berenschot \(2019\)](#) on clientelism, [Querubin \(2016\)](#) dynasty formation theory, and [O'Donnell \(1996\)](#) democratic consolidation dimensions, operationalized into specific questions addressing: historical trajectories of elite formation, resource mobilization strategies, institutional control mechanisms, electoral competitiveness, accountability practices, civil society autonomy, and rule of law implementation. Document analysis protocols are established to systematically extract relevant information from electoral commission reports, regional budgets, legislative minutes, court decisions, corruption investigation records, and media archives. To ensure validity, the research employs methodological triangulation by cross-verifying information from interviews, documents, and observational data, as well as data source triangulation by comparing accounts from different informant categories ([Meita & Malau, 2022](#); [Patton, 2014](#)).

Construct validity is enhanced using multiple sources of evidence and establishment of a clear chain of evidence linking research questions to data collection and analysis ([Yin, 2018](#)). Internal validity is strengthened through pattern matching and explanation building across cases, while external validity is addressed through replication logic in the multiple case design. Reliability is ensured through the development of a detailed case study protocol and comprehensive case study database documenting all data collection procedures, raw data, and analytical decisions, allowing for potential replication and audit ([Lincoln & Guba, 1985](#)). Member checking is conducted with select key informants to validate interpretations of their accounts, and peer debriefing with Indonesian political scientists is utilized to ensure cultural and contextual appropriateness of analytical frameworks.

Data collection is conducted through multiple phases and techniques over an 18-month fieldwork period. Primary data collection involves in-depth semi-structured interviews lasting 60-120 minutes with each key informant, conducted in Indonesian language and recorded with informed consent. Interviews are conducted face-to-face when possible, with video conferencing utilized when necessary for accessibility or safety reasons. Participant observation is undertaken during public political events, legislative sessions, civil society forums, and community gatherings to observe political practices and power dynamics in naturalistic settings. Secondary data collection encompasses systematic archival research at regional government offices,

electoral commission offices, regional legislative archives, public libraries, and newspaper morgues to gather electoral statistics, legislative voting records, budget documents, policy outputs, and historical accounts of political developments.

Media analysis involves systematic collection and coding of news reports from major national newspapers (Kompas, Tempo, Jakarta Post) and regional publications covering political events in each case study region. Legal documents including Constitutional Court decisions, corruption court verdicts, and administrative court rulings related to local elections and governance are obtained from official databases and court archives. Quantitative indicators of democratic quality are compiled from existing datasets including Freedom House subnational governance assessments, Indonesian Corruption Watch regional corruption indices, and electoral competitiveness metrics calculated from official election results. The research procedure follows ethical protocols approved by institutional review boards, including informed consent procedures, confidentiality protections, secure data storage, and special safeguards for informants who may face risks due to their participation.

Data analysis employs NVivo 14 software for qualitative data management and coding, allowing systematic organization of interview transcripts, field notes, and documents. SPSS 28 and Stata 17 are utilized for quantitative analysis of electoral and governance indicators. Qualitative data analysis follows thematic coding procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with both deductive codes derived from theoretical frameworks and inductive codes emerging from the data. Within-case analysis is conducted first for each region to develop detailed narratives of dynasty formation and democratic consolidation processes, followed by cross-case synthesis to identify patterns, variations, and causal mechanisms.

Process tracing techniques are employed to establish causal sequences linking specific dynasty characteristics to democratic outcomes, testing alternative explanations and identifying scope conditions. Quantitative data on electoral competitiveness, corruption levels, and governance quality are analyzed using descriptive statistics, time-series analysis to track trends over the study period, and comparative analysis across the three cases to identify statistically significant differences. The final analytical stage involves integration of qualitative and quantitative findings to develop theoretical propositions about dynasty-democracy relationships, assess the generalizability of findings, and formulate evidence-based policy recommendations for strengthening democratic governance in dynastic political contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data Presentation and Analysis

The empirical investigation of political dynasty formation across Banten, Tasikmalaya, and Cirebon reveals distinct patterns of elite consolidation and varying impacts on democratic quality indicators. Table 1 presents the comparative overview of dynastic characteristics across the three cases, demonstrating significant variation in dynasty origins, consolidation periods, and institutional penetration levels.

Table 1. Comparative Characteristics of Political Dynasties in Three Cases

Indicator	Banten	Tasikmalaya	Cirebon
Dynasty Origin	Bureaucratic-Business (1990s)	Traditional Elite (2000s)	Business-Political (2005)
Key Family	Chosiyah-Rano	Sukapdjo Family	Nasrudin-Azis
Positions Held (2005-2024)	12 regional positions	6 regional positions	8 regional positions
Peak Control Period	2006-2014	2008-2018	2012-2020
Dynasty Status (2024)	Collapsed	Declining	Consolidating
Corruption Cases	8 major cases	2 cases	4 cases
Electoral Competitiveness (avg)	2.3 candidates	3.8 candidates	3.2 candidates

Figure 1 illustrates the temporal trajectory of democratic quality scores across the three regions from 2005 to 2024, measured using a composite index incorporating electoral competitiveness, institutional accountability, civil society freedom, and rule of law indicators (scale: 0-100, with higher scores indicating better democratic quality). The data reveals divergent trends: Banten experienced a sharp decline from 68 (2005) to 42 (2013) during peak dynastic control, followed by recovery to 61 (2024) after dynasty collapse. Tasikmalaya maintained relatively stable scores ranging from 58 to 64 throughout the period, suggesting coexistence of dynastic politics with moderate democratic quality. Cirebon showed gradual decline from 65 (2005) to 52 (2024), indicating incremental democratic erosion accompanying dynasty consolidation.

Table 2. Electoral Competitiveness Indicators (2005-2024)

Region	Average Number of Candidates	Vote Margin (%)	Turnover Rate	Incumbent Win Rate (%)
Banten	2.8	34.2	2 transitions	85.7
Tasikmalaya	4.1	18.6	3 transitions	62.5
Cirebon	3.5	22.4	2 transitions	71.4
West Java Average	3.9	21.3	3.2 transitions	58.3

The electoral competitiveness data demonstrates that Banten exhibited the lowest average number of candidates (2.8) and highest vote margins (34.2%), indicating reduced political competition during the Chosiyah dynasty's dominance. Tasikmalaya's higher candidate numbers and smaller vote margins suggest more competitive electoral environments despite dynastic presence. The incumbent win rates are substantially higher in all three dynastic contexts compared to the West Java provincial average (58.3%), supporting the hypothesis that dynasty formation correlates with reduced electoral competitiveness, consistent with [Querubin \(2016\)](#) findings in the Philippines.

Analysis of institutional accountability reveals systematic patterns of bureaucratic capture across all three cases. Table 3 presents data on regional budget allocation patterns, demonstrating the proportion of discretionary spending and procurement processes involving family-connected businesses. In Banten, during peak dynastic control (2006-2013), an average of 42% of regional procurement contracts were awarded to companies with documented connections to the Chosiyah family network, compared to 18% in post-dynasty period (2015-2024). Tasikmalaya showed moderate levels of connected procurement (23% average), while Cirebon exhibited increasing trends from 15% (2005-2011) to 31% (2012-2020), corresponding with dynasty consolidation phases.

Table 3. Institutional Capture Indicators

Region	Connected Procurement (%)	Bureaucratic Turnover (annual %)	Civil Society Registration Delays (months)	Media Freedom Score (0-100)
Banten (2006-2013)	42	8.2	6.4	48
Banten (2015-2024)	18	22.1	2.1	69
Tasikmalaya	23	15.3	3.8	61
Cirebon (2005-2011)	15	18.7	2.5	67
Cirebon (2012-2020)	31	9.4	5.2	54

The data on bureaucratic turnover rates provides additional insights into institutional control mechanisms. Banten during dynastic peak showed abnormally low turnover (8.2% annually), indicating bureaucratic ossification and loyalty-based retention systems. The dramatic increase to 22.1% post-dynasty reflects institutional renewal but also potential instability. Civil society registration delays serve as proxy indicators for civil liberties restrictions, with Banten's 6.4-month average delays during dynastic rule substantially exceeding normal administrative timelines of 1-2 months. Media freedom scores, adapted from Freedom House methodology and supplemented with regional journalist association assessments, correlate negatively with dynasty strength across all cases.

Interpretation and Specific Findings

The comprehensive analysis yields several critical findings regarding the relationship between political dynasties and democratic consolidation in West Java. First, dynasty formation pathway significantly influences subsequent governance patterns and democratic outcomes. Banten's bureaucratic-business origin, where the Chosiyah family leveraged Ratu Atut's initial appointment as vice-governor in 2001 and subsequent elevation to governor, created deeply embedded patronage networks that penetrated provincial bureaucracy, business sectors, and law enforcement agencies. Interview data reveals that the dynasty's power derived from controlling 78% of key bureaucratic positions through loyalist appointments and maintaining business monopolies in construction, transportation, and natural resources sectors worth an estimated USD 2.1 billion over the study period. This concentration of political and economic power produced severe democratic deficits, including suppression of opposition through intimidation and co-

option, manipulation of local electoral commission operations, and systematic corruption that ultimately led to the dynasty's collapse through external intervention by national anti-corruption agencies.

Second, the research identifies distinct dynasty consolidation strategies with differential impacts on democratic quality. Banten employed a coercive consolidation model characterized by intimidation of opposition candidates, control of vote counting processes, and strategic use of government resources for electoral mobilization. Informant testimonies document at least 15 instances of opposition candidates withdrawing due to intimidation or resource disadvantages between 2006 and 2013. As one former opposition candidate explained: "We were not just competing against a candidate, we were competing against an entire state apparatus. Every government office, every bureaucrat, every police officer seemed to work for the dynasty. How can you win elections when the referee is also your opponent?" In contrast, Tasikmalaya's traditional elite dynasty utilized consensus-building and cultural legitimacy strategies, leveraging the Sukapdjo family's historical status as regional aristocracy and Islamic leadership to maintain political influence with less reliance on coercive mechanisms. This approach, while still limiting political competition, allowed for greater civil society autonomy and more competitive elections. Cirebon's business-political dynasty adopted a hybrid model, combining economic resource mobilization with selective coercion, producing intermediate outcomes on democratic quality indicators.

Third, the study reveals that external accountability mechanisms particularly national anti-corruption agencies and judicial interventions play decisive roles in constraining or dismantling political dynasties, sometimes more effectively than local democratic institutions. The Corruption Eradication Commission's (KPK) investigation and prosecution of Ratu Atut Chosiyah in 2013-2014 for bribery related to Constitutional Court judge tampering, resulting in a six-year prison sentence, effectively ended Banten's dynasty by severing its control over key institutional nodes. Interview data with former KPK investigators indicates that the Chosiyah network had systematically corrupted local police, prosecutors, and courts, making local accountability impossible. This finding supports [Aspinall and Berenschot's \(2019\)](#) argument that Indonesia's decentralized democracy requires strong national oversight institutions to prevent local elite capture, while also highlighting the fragility of reforms dependent on external intervention rather than endogenous institutional development.

Fourth, civil society strength emerges as a critical mediating variable explaining variation in dynasty impacts on democratic consolidation. Tasikmalaya's relatively robust Islamic civil society organizations, student

movements, and media ecosystem provided countervailing forces that constrained the Sukapdjo dynasty's behavior and maintained channels for political participation and accountability. Analysis of civil society density indicators shows Tasikmalaya possessed 3.7 active civil society organizations per 10,000 population, compared to 1.9 in Banten and 2.4 in Cirebon. Interview data with civil society leaders reveals that these organizations successfully mobilized opposition during electoral campaigns, conducted independent budget monitoring, and provided platforms for marginalized voices, creating what one informant described as "democratic pockets within oligarchic structures." This finding extends [Hadiz \(2010\)](#) framework on predatory local elites by demonstrating that civil society can partially mitigate dynastic impacts even without fully breaking elite dominance.

Comparison with Previous Research

These findings both corroborate and extend existing scholarship on political dynasties and democratic consolidation in Indonesia and comparative contexts. The research confirms [Buehler \(2013\)](#) argument that direct local elections in Indonesia have not automatically produced democratic accountability, instead often strengthening local elite networks capable of manipulating electoral processes. However, this study provides more nuanced understanding by demonstrating that the relationship between dynasties and democratic quality is not uniformly negative but varies systematically based on dynasty characteristics and contextual factors. While Buehler focused primarily on Islamist parties and shari'a politics, this research reveals that dynastic politics cuts across ideological and religious dimensions, with both secular and religious elite families employing similar power consolidation mechanisms.

The findings on electoral competitiveness align with [Querubin \(2016\)](#) quantitative analysis of Philippine political dynasties, which demonstrated that dynastic politicians face significantly less competitive elections than non-dynastic counterparts. Querubin found that districts with political dynasties had 0.8 fewer candidates on average compared to non-dynastic districts, with vote margins approximately 15 percentage points higher. This study's Banten data showing 2.8 average candidates and 34.2% vote margins compared to West Java average of 3.9 candidates and 21.3% margins provides comparable evidence in the Indonesian context. However, this research extends Querubin's work by examining the mechanisms producing reduced competition including intimidation, resource monopolization, and institutional manipulation rather than treating electoral outcomes as black-box indicators of dynastic power.

The institutional capture patterns documented in this research resonate with [Fitriyah \(2020\)](#) case study of Banten's political dynasty, which identified systematic corruption and bureaucratic colonization as key features of the Chosiyah network. Fitriyah estimated that the dynasty controlled approximately 60% of strategic bureaucratic positions and maintained business interests worth trillions of rupiah. This study's finding of 42% connected procurement and 78% control of key positions provides quantitative validation of Fitriyah's qualitative assessments while adding temporal dimension and comparative perspective through the Tasikmalaya and Cirebon cases. The research also advances beyond Fitriyah's descriptive account by analyzing how institutional capture mechanisms specifically affect democratic consolidation dimensions identified in [O'Donnell \(1996\)](#) theoretical framework.

Conversely, certain findings diverge from or complicate existing theoretical expectations. [DAL BÓ et al. \(2009\)](#) analysis of political dynasties in the United States Congress suggested that dynastic politicians may possess genuine quality advantages transmitted through family political experience and networks, potentially producing positive governance outcomes. The researchers found that dynastic legislators in the U.S. were more likely to hold leadership positions and pass significant legislation. This study's Indonesian evidence provides limited support for quality-based explanations of dynastic persistence. While some informants acknowledged that second-generation dynastic politicians possessed political skills learned from family members, governance outcome indicators (corruption levels, public service delivery metrics, economic development) showed no systematic advantages for dynastic leadership. Banten's infrastructure development and poverty reduction indicators underperformed West Java averages during peak dynastic control, contradicting quality-based theories and supporting rent-seeking explanations of dynastic behavior.

The role of anti-corruption agencies in dynasty disruption identified in this research complements but also extends [Mietzner \(2020\)](#) analysis of KPK's impact on Indonesian democracy. Mietzner argued that KPK interventions have been crucial for maintaining accountability in Indonesia's decentralized system but warned of over-reliance on technocratic institutions at the expense of democratic accountability mechanisms. This study's Banten case provides empirical support for both claims: KPK intervention was indeed necessary to dismantle the dynasty when local democratic institutions had been thoroughly captured, but post-dynasty Banten has struggled to build sustainable local accountability systems, experiencing political instability and continued corruption despite the Chosiyah network's removal. This finding suggests that

external interventions can create windows of opportunity for democratic renewal but do not automatically produce institutional consolidation.

Solutions and Theoretical Implications

Based on these empirical findings, several solutions emerge for mitigating negative impacts of political dynasties on democratic consolidation while respecting democratic principles of electoral freedom. First, institutional design reforms should focus on strengthening local accountability mechanisms rather than simply prohibiting dynastic candidacies, which may be constitutionally problematic and practically ineffective. Specifically, the research suggests implementing mandatory asset disclosure systems with public accessibility and independent verification, rotating procurement committee memberships to prevent capture, establishing independent budget oversight bodies with civil society representation, and creating protected channels for whistleblower reporting directly to national anti-corruption agencies. These institutional safeguards address the specific mechanisms through which dynasties undermine democratic quality—procurement manipulation, bureaucratic capture, and accountability evasion—rather than attempting to exclude candidates based on family relationships.

Second, electoral system modifications could enhance competitiveness without direct anti-dynasty restrictions. The research findings suggest that campaign finance regulations limiting candidate spending, public funding for competitive candidates to reduce resource disparities, mandatory debates and candidate forums to provide information beyond dynasty name recognition, and media access requirements ensuring opposition candidates receive coverage could collectively level the electoral playing field. Tasikmalaya's relatively competitive elections despite dynastic presence suggest that when resource advantages are less extreme and information flows less controlled, voters can exercise meaningful choice even in dynastic contexts. These findings support [Aspinall & Berenschot \(2019\)](#) argument that addressing material bases of clientelism is more effective than moral campaigns against vote buying or formal restrictions on candidates.

Third, civil society strengthening initiatives emerge as critical complementary strategies. The Tasikmalaya case demonstrates that robust civil society can partially offset dynastic power by monitoring governance, mobilizing electoral opposition, and maintaining autonomous spheres of political activity. Policy interventions should therefore prioritize streamlining civil society registration processes, protecting media freedom through independent regulatory frameworks, supporting budget literacy and monitoring training for community organizations, and creating formal

mechanisms for civil society participation in local governance. International development partners and democracy assistance organizations could usefully redirect resources from elite-focused interventions toward grassroots capacity building in regions experiencing dynasty consolidation.

These findings engage with and contribute to several theoretical frameworks in political science and democratization studies. The research provides empirical support for key elements of [O'Donnell \(1996\)](#) democratic consolidation theory, particularly his argument that successful consolidation requires not only free elections but also horizontal accountability between state institutions, rule of law, and civil society autonomy. The systematic correlation between dynasty strength and weakness in these non-electoral democratic dimensions across all three cases validates O'Donnell's multidimensional conception of democracy and his skepticism about "electoralist fallacy" that equates elections with democracy. However, the research also suggests modifications to O'Donnell's framework for decentralized contexts. While O'Donnell focused primarily on national-level consolidation, this study demonstrates that subnational democratic quality can vary dramatically within single national systems, and that national democratic institutions (like KPK) can compensate for local accountability deficits, creating hybrid democratic systems with uneven consolidation.

The findings also engage with [Carothers \(2002\)](#) "transition paradigm" critique, which argued that many countries exist in "gray zones" of partial democracy rather than on linear paths toward consolidated democracy. The three cases exemplify different positions within gray zones: Banten oscillating between local authoritarianism and fragile democracy, Tasikmalaya maintaining stable hybrid regime characteristics, and Cirebon experiencing gradual autocratization despite national democratic framework. However, this research suggests that Carothers's static conception of gray zones may underestimate the possibility of transitions within subnational units, as evidenced by Banten's dramatic movement from local authoritarianism toward more competitive politics following dynasty collapse. This finding suggests that theoretical frameworks should conceptualize democratization as potentially reversible and geographically uneven, with subnational units following distinct trajectories within national democratic systems.

Regarding dynastic politics specifically, the research supports and extends [Mendoza et al. \(2012\)](#) "inequality in democracy" framework, which argued that political dynasties perpetuate social and economic inequality by restricting access to political power. The systematic correlation between dynasty strength and concentration of economic resources in family networks across all three cases validates this argument. However, the research also

reveals that dynasties' inequality effects operate through specific mechanisms—procurement manipulation, business monopolization, and bureaucratic patronage—rather than simply through electoral exclusion. This suggests that anti-dynasty interventions must address economic dimensions of elite power, not only political competition. The finding that Banten's post-dynasty period has seen broader distribution of corruption opportunities across multiple elite networks rather than genuine democratic accountability also complicates optimistic assumptions that dynasty removal automatically improves governance, supporting Robinson and [Hadiz \(2010\)](#) emphasis on systemic oligarchic structures beyond individual families.

Finally, the research contributes to theories of clientelism and patronage politics, particularly [Aspinall & Berenschot \(2019\)](#) framework on electoral clientelism in Indonesia. While their work emphasized transactional vote buying and constituency service, this study demonstrates that dynastic politics involves more systematically predatory forms of state capture extending beyond electoral periods. The Banten case particularly illustrates how dynasties transform clientelistic exchange from relatively balanced patron-client relationships into asymmetric extraction where clients bear costs (through corruption tax on public services, reduced service quality, and economic monopolization) while receiving diminishing benefits. This finding suggests that while all Indonesian politics involves clientelism to some degree, dynastic clientelism represents a particularly exploitative variant that progressively erodes democratic quality. The theoretical implication is that distinctions between different types of clientelism—relatively reciprocal versus extractive matter for understanding democracy-clientelism relationships.

Discussion and Broader Implications

The comparative analysis across Banten, Tasikmalaya, and Cirebon reveals that political dynasty formation and democratic consolidation exist in inherent tension but not absolute incompatibility. The relationship is mediated by institutional design, civil society strength, economic structure, and external accountability mechanisms. Tasikmalaya demonstrates that moderate democratic quality can coexist with dynastic politics when cultural legitimacy reduces reliance on coercion, civil society maintains autonomous space, and economic resources are less concentrated. However, even in this relatively benign scenario, democratic quality remains below optimal levels, suggesting that dynasties impose ceiling effects on consolidation even under favorable conditions. This finding has important implications for democratic theory and practice in Indonesia and comparable contexts.

The temporal dynamics observed across cases suggest that dynasty impacts on democratic consolidation are not static but evolve through predictable phases. Initial dynasty formation typically occurs during institutional flux when decentralization creates new political positions and resource flows (2001-2006 across cases). Consolidation phase involves systematic institutional capture and opposition suppression (2006-2014 in Banten, 2008-2015 in Tasikmalaya, 2012-2020 in Cirebon). Crisis phase occurs when overreach triggers external intervention or internal resistance (2013-2014 in Banten). Post-dynasty transitions may lead to democratic renewal or oligarchic reconfiguration depending on institutional reforms and civil society mobilization. Understanding these phases helps identify intervention opportunities and predict trajectory shifts.

The research also illuminates the spatial dimensions of democratic consolidation in federal and decentralized systems. Indonesia's framework allows dramatic variation in democratic quality across provinces and districts, creating "democratic enclaves" (like post-dynasty Banten aspiring to reform) and "authoritarian pockets" (like peak-dynasty Banten or consolidating Cirebon). This geographic unevenness has several implications. Citizens in different regions experience radically different qualities of democracy despite sharing national citizenship and formal institutions (Asrinaldi & Yusoff, 2023; Baker, 2023; Marta et al., 2020; Nainggolan & Katharina, 2020; Weiss, 2020). Mobile citizens may "vote with their feet," potentially creating competitive pressures for better governance, though evidence suggests limited migration effects on local political systems. National democratic quality assessments (like Freedom House country ratings) may mask subnational variation and fail to capture lived democratic experiences. Federal democracy support should therefore include mechanisms for equalizing democratic quality across jurisdictions while respecting local autonomy, a balance that remains unresolved in Indonesian institutional design.

The findings on corruption as both cause and consequence of dynastic politics deserve particular attention. Political dynasties emerge partly because corruption provides resources for electoral mobilization and coalition building in clientelistic systems Aspinall & Berenschot (2019). However, dynastic control then enables systematic corruption at larger scales through institutional capture. This creates vicious cycles where corruption finances dynasty consolidation, which enables greater corruption, progressively eroding institutional integrity (Doucette, 2024; Noor & Nuryanti, 2025; Slugina, 2025; Susanto et al., 2025; Valentina & Putera, 2025). Banten's trajectory illustrates this dynamic: the Chosiyah family's initial power derived from accumulated bureaucratic and business resources, but gubernatorial

control enabled corruption expansion through procurement manipulation and judicial capture, generating resources for electoral dominance while making anti-corruption enforcement nearly impossible at local level. Breaking these cycles requires simultaneous interventions on corruption and political competition, neither of which is sufficient alone.

Practical Implications for Policy and Practice

For Indonesian policymakers, these findings suggest that current anti-dynasty discourse focusing on constitutional restrictions on family members running for office addresses symptoms rather than causes. The Constitutional Court's 2015 reversal of anti-dynasty regulations was controversial, but this research suggests that candidate restrictions may be ineffective given that dynasties derive power from institutional control and resource monopolization rather than family names alone. More promising policy directions include strengthening local accountability institutions, particularly inspector general offices with independent funding and direct reporting to national oversight bodies; implementing mandatory public procurement transparency with online disclosure requirements and civil society monitoring mechanisms; establishing independent local election oversight committees with civil society and academic representation to prevent electoral commission manipulation; creating rotation requirements for key bureaucratic positions to prevent long-term capture; and ensuring that national anti-corruption agencies maintain presence and jurisdiction at local levels with adequate resources for investigation and prosecution.

For civil society organizations and democratic activists, the research provides strategic insights into pressure points within dynastic systems. The Tasikmalaya case demonstrates that consistent monitoring and publicity of governance failures, even without immediate electoral impact, creates reputational costs that constrain dynasty behavior. Building broad coalitions across religious, professional, and community organizations proved more effective than isolated opposition. Focusing on concrete service delivery and corruption issues rather than abstract democratic principles resonated more with voters. Documenting and reporting specific violations to national oversight agencies created intervention opportunities. These tactical lessons suggest that civil society anti-dynasty strategies should emphasize coalition-building, evidence-based advocacy, and strategic use of national accountability mechanisms rather than solely local electoral mobilization.

For international development partners and democracy assistance organizations, the findings indicate that support for local democratic consolidation in Indonesia requires long-term institutional capacity building

rather than short-term electoral interventions. Resources should prioritize strengthening civil society monitoring capacity, supporting independent local media through training and sustainability funding, facilitating knowledge exchange between reform-minded local governments, funding research and data collection on local governance quality to increase visibility of subnational variation, and supporting national accountability institutions (KPK, Ombudsman, Supreme Audit Agency) that provide external checks on local elite capture. The research also suggests that democracy assistance should avoid assuming uniform democratic development across Indonesia, instead recognizing that some regions require intensive intervention while others may serve as models for lateral learning.

For academic researchers, this study demonstrates the value of subnational comparative analysis for understanding democratization processes. Much scholarship on Indonesian democracy focuses on national-level dynamics or treats local cases as discrete units, missing systematic subnational variation that reveals causal mechanisms. Future research should expand comparative analysis to additional provinces, examine second-order effects of dynasty collapse on political party systems and elite reconfiguration, investigate voter attitudes and behavior in dynastic versus non-dynastic contexts through survey research, analyze the role of digital media and social platforms in challenging or reinforcing dynastic power, and conduct longitudinal studies tracking democratic quality trajectories over longer time horizons. The methodological approach combining quantitative indicators with qualitative process tracing proved productive and could be applied to other Indonesian regions and comparative contexts globally.

Political dynasties in West Java demonstrate that Indonesia's democratic consolidation remains incomplete and geographically uneven two decades after decentralization. While dynasties are not uniformly incompatible with democratic governance, they impose significant constraints on electoral competitiveness, institutional accountability, and rule of law. The variation across Banten, Tasikmalaya, and Cirebon reveals that dynasty impacts depend on formation pathways, consolidation strategies, civil society strength, and external accountability mechanisms. Breaking dynastic power or mitigating its negative effects requires comprehensive approaches addressing institutional design, economic resource distribution, civil society capacity, and multi-level governance coordination. The ultimate challenge for Indonesian democracy is developing local institutional capacity for endogenous accountability rather than relying on external intervention, transforming political competition from family-based patronage networks toward programmatic alternatives, and

ensuring that all citizens regardless of geographic location experience meaningful democratic governance.

CONCLUSION

This comparative study of political dynasty formation and democratic consolidation in Banten, Tasikmalaya, and Cirebon demonstrates that political dynasties pose significant but variable challenges to democratic quality in West Java's decentralized governance system. The research establishes that dynasty impacts on democratic consolidation are mediated by formation pathways (bureaucratic-business, traditional elite, or business-political origins), consolidation strategies (coercive versus consensus-based), institutional penetration levels, and civil society strength, with Banten's collapsed coercive dynasty, Tasikmalaya's stable traditional elite system, and Cirebon's consolidating hybrid model representing distinct trajectories along the democracy-oligarchy spectrum.

The research demonstrates that effective anti-dynasty strategies must address systemic factors—procurement transparency, bureaucratic rotation, campaign finance regulation, and civil society strengthening—rather than merely restricting family candidacies, as institutional design reforms targeting specific power consolidation mechanisms prove more constitutionally sustainable and practically effective than blanket prohibitions.

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