

Democracy: Political Dynasty Strategy in Local Power in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the kinship political strategies used by local political elites in maintaining and reproducing power in Indonesia. Kinship politics, or often called political dynasty, is a phenomenon that is deeply rooted in the Indonesian political system, especially since the era of decentralization and regional autonomy. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques through interviews, observations, and written documentation. Through a study of cases such as Agus Ambo Djiwa in Pasangkayu and references to Yoes C. Kenawas' theory of Family Organizational Capabilities (FOCs), this paper explores five main strategies: reproduction of power through elections and political parties, placement of loyalists in the bureaucracy, patron-client mobilization, use of cultural symbols, and adaptation to digital technology. The findings show that the success of a dynasty depends not only on family relationships but also on the ability of political families to manage power systematically, both through internal structures and external influences. Kinship politics is not merely a traditional practice but a modern strategy that continues to transform following social, political, and technological dynamics. This study concludes that although electoral politics in Indonesia are increasingly open, the power structure is still heavily influenced by strong kinship networks and is adaptive to changing times.

Keywords: Kinship politics, political dynasty, power strategy, local elections, patron-client.

INTRODUCTION

Studies on kinship politics in Indonesia generally focus on how a political actor can maintain and regain his position in the local political context. There are various strategies used by local actors to maintain their dominance, and one of the most common methods is through the practice of dynasty politics or kinship politics (Aspinall, & As'ad, 2016);(Buehler & Tan, 2007);(Haryanto, 2014); (Kenawas, 2020); (Mietzner, 2016). In practice, dynasty politics usually relies on family ties, the use of force, the distribution of patronage, or the manipulation of regulations in order to maintain control over power. Generally, power is transferred hereditarily within the family, resulting in a political monopoly. Many local actors have implemented this strategy, one of which is seen in South Sulawesi Province, where the Yasin Limpo family has controlled various important positions in the local government for decades (Buehler & Tan, 2007); (Purwaningsih, 2015). Similar phenomena can also be found in various other regions in Indonesia (Harjudin & Zuada, 2020); (Pahrudin, 2018); (Purwaningsih, 2013); (Effendi, 2018). Most studies on the sustainability of power in Indonesia tend to conclude that kinship

networks are the most common political strategy used in various regions (Aspinall, & As'ad, 2016). However, this study shows that political dynasties do not always extend the period of power. Agus Ambo Djiwa presents an interesting case study that reveals different dynamics from the dominant tendencies analyzed in local political studies. Agus Ambo Djiwa has recorded strong political achievements from the local to national levels (Rusdin, 2021).

His impact is not limited to himself; his influence is amplified through the family structure where his wife, niece, daughter, and siblings hold significant political responsibilities. Pasangkayu is a real example of the existence and resilience of local political dynasties in Indonesia, because this kinship politics is not only a legacy of power but also a system of power designed to be maintained throughout the generations. From 2001 to 2005, Agus Ambo Djiwa began his political career as Deputy Regent of North Mamuju. He is said to be one of the key figures behind the separation of North Mamuju Regency, which was later renamed Pasangkayu. His subsequent political career was based on the social and political capital he gained during this period. Agus Ambo Djiwa was first elected in the 2005 regional head election as a candidate for regent. Initially serving two consecutive terms (2005–2010 and 2010–2015), he was re-elected for the 2016–2021 period. After his term as regent, Agus Ambo Djiwa remained active in politics. Instead, he turned to the national stage and was elected as a member of the Indonesian People's Representative Council, thus bringing his local political expertise to the national level. This enhanced his reputation as a major political actor in West Sulawesi and provided an opportunity for his family and relatives to continue their political legacy at the regional level.

His success in winning the election and maintaining his position was not only based on family ties, but also on political procedures, which defined his success in effective political tactics and the development of political capital that essentially drove his continued electoral performance. A deep social event in the Indonesian political landscape, kinship politics is the practice of patronage and nepotism based on family and kinship ties in obtaining, maintaining, and exploiting political power (Noak, 2024.). Although this phenomenon is not new, Indonesian political history has always featured it; even in the pre-independence era, monarchies and sultanates passed down power from generation to generation within families (Lokal et al., 2013). After the 1998 reforms, oligarchies found new pathways through political parties, parliaments, and funding election campaigns (n.d.). In the modern era, kinship politics has evolved into a strategy used by politicians to defend their views, build political dynasties, and secure access to financial resources and power (Lokal et al., 2013).

After the reform, regional autonomy and decentralization of power should have opened up space for more democratic political participation in general. Instead, kinship politics has strengthened locally as members of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) build power networks based on family ties and personal contacts (n.d.). Local leaders have also become stronger in this regard. The direct election system for local leaders exacerbates this problem by requiring significant political spending, providing opportunities for oligarchs and capitalists to influence the political process through financial support (n.d.). Public policies that reflect family interests rather than community interests help strengthen family supremacy in local politics and over economic resources (Hamid, 2014). In addition, political corruption—where legislative candidates or city leaders buy votes and public support with money and goods—has become very common (Kartini & Sanusi, 2022).

Those with greater financial resources usually have an advantage in gaining political power, resulting in inequality and hindering social mobility (Sari et al., 2023). In various aspects of national life, the phenomenon of family politics in Indonesia has complex and diverse impacts. Economically, family politics can hinder inclusive and sustainable economic growth (Setyaningrum & Saragih, 2019). The concentration of wealth in the hands of a handful of families and elite groups can exacerbate economic inequality (n.d.). Access to business opportunities and financial resources is limited to those who do not have personal or family ties to those in power. Often, investments are made abroad, such as in the British Virgin Islands, Singapore, and Hong Kong (n.d.). This can hinder creativity, entrepreneurship, and the creation of new jobs.

Politically, family politics can threaten the integrity of healthy governance and democracy. Public officials who abuse their positions for the benefit of their families and themselves cause corruption, collusion, and nepotism to become more common. In addition, inadequate law enforcement policies and weak supervision exacerbate the spread of family politics (Tambunan, 2023).

Political parties have conflicting impacts. On the one hand, political parties must provide a forum for public interests to be expressed and the election of extraordinary political leaders. On the other hand, political parties can be a tool used by political elites to maintain and expand their power. Often, candidates with dynasty backgrounds benefit from structured and informal political recruitment, as well as from the use of pragmatic elements such as financial ability and electability of candidates (Fitriyah, 2020). Ideological crises within political parties also trigger political conflicts that emphasize symbolic and artificial issues (Gerald, 2019).

Addressing family politics in Indonesia requires a comprehensive plan that involves many parties. Strengthening democratic institutions such as parliament, courts, and political parties helps ensure accountability and transparency in the political process. Transparency and meritocratic cadre structures as part of political party reform help reduce the dominance of political elites and dynasties through open recruitment. In addition, improving the quality of political education and civil society participation is essential to increase critical awareness and inspire individuals to reject family politics. Wider and more effective access to public information is needed to uncover dishonest behavior and abuse of authority by state officials (Mulyadi, 2017).

Especially at the city level, kinship politics remains a major phenomenon in the dynamics of post-reformasi politics in Indonesia. Although the democratic structure chosen offers greater opportunities for public participation, political power in many cases revolves around family circles and networks. This trend shows that family ties are not only a social issue but also a careful political technique used for centuries to maintain dominance.

In addition to the nomination of family members in elections, kinship politics includes control of economic resources, influence over bureaucratic institutions, power within political parties, and manipulation of public opinion through social media. Political dynasties are a legacy of power networks maintained through adaptive strategies, not just biological inheritance.

The progress of democratization and digitalization has changed kinship politics. Political actors have begun to use digital technologies such as social media, local influencers, and digital political branding to maintain and increase their influence. On the other hand, the influence of local culture that promotes loyalty and patronage also supports the strengthening of the existence of political dynasties in many regions.

The problem is that these methods often create a democratic dilemma. On the one hand, they can support political stability and policy continuity; on the other hand, they have the potential to hinder political regeneration, highlight nepotism, and limit the scope of fair and acceptable political activities. This event highlights the importance of deeply analyzing how kinship-based political strategies are designed and implemented to dominate Indonesia. By deeply analyzing the mechanisms of power succession through families and adaptation to changing conditions, including the digitalization of politics, this study aims to help practically and intellectually in understanding the dynamics of local politics in Indonesia.

This paper aims to analyze the political strategies used by political actors to maintain their hegemony. This dissertation explains the mechanisms and reasons that allow local political actors to remain in power and excel in the dynamics of political contestation in Indonesia today. This paper considers aspects of strategy and political resources owned, thus offering an alternative perspective on the phenomenon of local power continuity, which is often studied through the approach of family politics or dynasty

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is often said that for many politicians, dynastic politics has become a family business (Scartozzi, 2017). Like other professions—such as medicine, lawyers, or businessmen—it is natural and expected for political descendants to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors to continue their family legacy (Putnam, 1976)). The political socialization approach often uses this rationale to justify the existence of political dynasties in democracies. However, this approach fails to explain why not all candidates who inherit office succeed in continuing the leadership positions held by their predecessors. Furthermore, it is unclear how the political socialization approach explains the fact that only a few families are able to expand their reach of influence and maintain political positions for decades, even among those who have successfully navigated the political succession process. The failure of the political socialization approach to explain the persistence of political dynasties as “family businesses” occurs because it ignores the fact that ensuring the success of a family business requires more than political socialization or the inheritance of political resources and family reputation. The family business literature teaches us that overseeing a family firm is neither simple nor automatic. A statement from a family business leader, as quoted in (Sinha et al., 2022), is illustrative. The leader said, “Running a business is easy. Running a family is hard. Running a family business is the hardest.” “The most critical problems facing family business owners are more family-based than business-based [*italics in original*],” added family business expert, (Ward, 2004). Unlike modern bureaucracies, families are not governed by a formal set of rules for managing succession. Most families do not have a meritocracy (Sinha et al., 2022). Often, emotions play a more important role than rationality in decision-making or conflict resolution. Furthermore, having the option to “exit” from the family is extremely difficult. Unlike in Weberian organizations, the head of the family or founder cannot simply “fire” his son or daughter if he or she makes a major mistake that could jeopardize the survival of the family business. The boundaries between what is family and what is business are porous and are often crossed by family members. For these reasons, family businesses face unique challenges. Successful and enduring family businesses must simultaneously address two significant challenges: maintaining business strength and preserving family integrity (Ward, 2004). The problem is, achieving business success often clashes with maintaining family harmony. Another issue is, as Ward (2004) aptly summarizes, “Although family businesses tend to share many of the same issues, the issues that are most important to any business at any given point in time depend on its stage of evolution as a family business. Ensuring the survival of family-owned firms requires families to adopt several principles of modern bureaucracies, including institutionalizing rules for succession and promotion (Soufani & J. Lam., 2001), establishing conflict resolution mechanisms (Lee & G. Rogoff, 1996), defining functional roles for members, and formulating procedures for involving non-family members. Therefore, using the approach

Using insights from business studies and the assumption that running a political dynasty is similar to running a family business, an analysis of the success and failure of political families in building their political dynasties must also take these factors into account. What holds for family businesses also holds for political dynasties. This study introduces a concept that can be used to examine the success and failure of political families in building political dynasties. It argues that variation in success in dynasty building can be explained by Family Organizational Capabilities (FOC). FOC refers to the ability of political dynasties to efficiently acquire and utilize family resources by building functional specialization, processes, and institutions to gain competitive advantage in elections. FOC consists of two main components: internal and external governance. Internal governance consists of functional specialization, which signifies the individual role of each family member in the dynasty-building effort. Another element of internal governance is shared knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

This research method uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to explore in depth the strategy of kinship politics in maintaining power at the local level in Indonesia. This approach is considered appropriate to understand the complexity of socio-political dynamics that cannot be

explained numerically, as well as to reveal the meaning behind the actions of dynasty political actors. This study adopts a case study method, with a special focus on the case of Agus Ambo Djiwa in Pasangkayu Regency as a representation of kinship political practices. Data were collected from in-depth interviews, official archive documentation, and library studies that included scientific literature and theories such as Family Organizational Capabilities (Kenawas), patron-client, and oligarchy.

The data analysis technique was carried out through thematic analysis, namely identifying strategic patterns in the management of political family power, which were analyzed through the stages of reduction, narrative presentation, and drawing conclusions. To maintain the validity of the findings, source triangulation was used, namely comparing interview results with academic documents and references, and confirming with expert informants to strengthen the validity of the research interpretation. The data used in this study are divided into two categories, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from unwritten sources through in-depth interviews with informants and field observations conducted by the author. Meanwhile, secondary data is written data obtained from documents such as letters, archives, pictures, leaflets, guides, and other written materials relevant to the focus of the research. Data processing was carried out systematically following three main stages according to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), namely: (1) data condensation, namely the process of sorting and simplifying data to make it more focused and relevant; (2) data presentation, in the form of organizing information in the form of narratives, tables, or graphs; and (3) drawing and verifying conclusions, namely the final stage to test the validity of the findings and compile accurate interpretations.

DISCUSSION

The formation of political dynasties is not justified in a democratic country. This is because political power is only enjoyed by a handful of people, because everyone has the same right to be involved in politics. In addition, political power can be dangerous if the process of power is maintained continuously, especially if it is inherited to family or relatives. In line with Lord Acton's statement that power tends to be misused and absolute power is definitely misused (power tends to corrupt, and absolute power tends to corrupts absolutely) the practice of absolute political dynasty power can also be interpreted as power inherited to family or relatives. The political strategy of kinship, according to Yoes C. Kenawas can be understood through a number of his works and findings, especially from his dissertation and articles that examine political dynasties in Indonesia that dynasties that are able to build solid internal and external governance tend to be more durable and are able to control electoral institutions and state resources (Kenawas, 2024). Kenawas emphasized that local political dynasties survive and thrive because they use systematic strategies to secure power.

Reproduction of Power Through Elections and Political Parties

Kenawas said that political families utilize electoral channels as a means of perpetuating power. Family members advance in regional head elections, DPRD, and DPR RI in turns or simultaneously to maintain the existence and influence of the family at various levels of government. Local political dynasties use elections not to provide choices, but to reproduce power within the family circle (Kenawas, 2021).

Especially since the era of decentralization and regional autonomy during the reform era, the phenomenon of political kinship or political dynasty has become a natural component of the democratic landscape in Indonesia. In a procedural democracy based on general elections, everyone should have an equal opportunity to run for office and gain power through open and fair procedures. In fact, political families often use general elections as a means to systematically continue and replicate power. This process is a well-planned and implemented strategy under the leadership of political parties and exploits institutional weaknesses in democracy, not a result of chance. Political families generally use the reproduction of political power through general elections as a means to maintain their supremacy.

Often, regional heads who serve two terms can inspire their spouses, children, in-laws, or close relatives to follow in their footsteps as successors. Maintaining a political position is only one goal; another goal is to protect the power networks and commercial interests that have been built during their tenure. This strategy, known as continuity of power through elections, allows political dynasties to maintain their legitimacy while continuing to follow the official democratic process.

Political dynasties cannot develop without close involvement in party institutions. Political elites with family ties may occupy key positions in the party, including leading party branches at the district level, participating in provincial party executive committees, or playing an informal role in candidate selection. This control allows them to decide who to nominate, who to recommend, and how coalitions are formed and seats are distributed in local elections. In addition, local political parties are generally pragmatic and give top priority to candidates with electoral appeal and financial resources, which in this context usually correlate with political families. Cadre regeneration is also hampered because the dominance of a few families that are deeply entrenched in the party hierarchy limits access to leadership roles. This supports an exclusive recruitment approach based on family loyalty rather than the quality and ability of cadres.

Placing Loyalists in Bureaucratic and Party Structures

Another strategy used to limit access to information through the bureaucracy is to place supporters or relatives in political parties and bureaucracies. This allows one to control political recruitment and budget practices. One of the key strategies of family politics used by political elites to maintain and expand their power is the placement of loyalists, or family members, in key positions in the bureaucracy and political parties. This technique is not just nepotism but also a deliberate attempt to control important channels in government and political power, including information, money, and the decision-making process.

Loyalists placed in the bureaucracy help political elites to directly monitor policy implementation, budget management, and distribution of money aimed at strengthening their political base. By controlling the bureaucracy, families or kinship-based political parties can ensure that government policies and programs are implemented according to their goals, allowing loyalists to gain political and financial benefits. In addition, bureaucratic control allows one to obtain vital information that can be used to predict and manage political challenges such as intergroup competition. This strategic information shapes the development of political strategies, influences the electoral process, and helps manage internal control systems.

On the other hand, organizing loyalists within a political party framework allows one to control the recruitment of cadres and party decision-making. Under the dominance of a particular family or group, political parties often give high priority to cadres from the same environment, thereby strengthening their power networks. Candidates outside the family circle find it difficult to participate and compete, thus hindering effective political regeneration.

In addition, political party dominance helps family elites to influence political alliances, the distribution of parliamentary seats, and the nomination of executive positions at the national and local levels. Political parties serve not only as political vehicles but also as tools to ensure that certain families or groups remain powerful. This strategy is also closely related to patronage, where loyalists placed in political parties or bureaucracies are given projects, access to resources, or jobs. These benefits strengthen the kinship-based political power structure and encourage loyalty.

However, the position of loyalists sometimes causes problems in the government structure because it can encourage corruption, conflicts of interest, and a decline in the quality of public services. In addition, limiting the scope of political participation in other areas of life and inhibiting openness and transparency may be part of this strategy. In the digital era, the strategy of loyalist inclusion has now begun to penetrate the administration of social media and digital platforms. Loyalists are not only

placed technically but also as digital content managers, trend makers, or influencers because they maintain the political image of a particular family or political group.

The configuration of loyalists in the bureaucracy and political parties as a whole is the basis of kinship-based political tactics that help political elites not only to maintain power but also to systematically control the flow of resources and information. This method shows that kinship politics in Indonesia is not only about blood ties but also about mature and orderly institutional administration needed to maintain political dominance.

Patron-Client Mobilization

Yoes Kenawas suggests that the basic strategy is the patron-client relationship, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or income. Through government initiatives, job availability, or support, family elites maintain community loyalty. The mobilization of patron-client relationships is one of the main strategies needed for the continuity of power in the study of family politics in Indonesia.

According to Yoes Kenawas, the maintenance of local political elite authority largely depends on patron-client networks rooted in ethnicity, religion, or finance. Especially in areas with strong family roots, this strategy is not only a common political habit but also a deep and solid system embedded in the socio-political framework of Indonesian society.

In principle, the patron-client relationship, namely the relationship in which a patron (in this case a political leader and his family) provides protection, access, and resources to his clients (a particular community or group that depends on the patron), is asymmetrical. Clients respond with political support, loyalty, and participation in elections and other political events. Clients are communities that depend on political and financial resources within the framework of kinship politics; patrons are members of political families who manage these resources.

Yoes Kenawas emphasizes that patron-client mobilization in Indonesia includes financial assistance as well as access to jobs, development projects, social support, and administrative facilities. Political elites use these instruments as powerful political negotiation weapons to build and maintain a strong support base. Powerful political families, for example, can direct government projects to their constituents or give special priority to certain locations for social assistance or employment opportunities.

In addition, patron-client relationships function as social control mechanisms that maintain local political stability. Political elites can manage community expectations through this patronage system, thereby suppressing political resistance. In addition to its transactional nature, the loyalty generated by patron-client networks is deeply rooted culturally and socially, making it difficult for outsiders or political opponents to penetrate these ties. This also suggests that community customs that encourage personal responsibility and solidarity among community members are in line with family politics in Indonesia. However, the phenomenon of patron-client mobilization affects the democratic system twice. One argument is that it increases political participation at the local level and ensures better access to government resources. On the other hand, excessive patronage can lead to nepotism, corruption, and the restriction of honest political competition. Often, the dominance of consumers and patrons hinders the rebirth of leadership and promotes political oligarchies that challenge non-family members to join.

In today's digital era, information and communication technology has revolutionized patron-client mobilization. Political elites with family ties combine traditional assistance with digital projects aimed at loyalist online networks, thereby increasing the reach and efficiency of their political mobilization. Yoes Kenawas states that patron-client mobilization in general is one of the main forces that allows family politics to survive and thrive in Indonesia's new democratic government. This strategy includes not only the distribution of resources but also the management of quite complex social and cultural relations, so that it functions as a strong and durable political weapon.

Strengthening Cultural Symbols and Local Identity

Dynasty politicians often use local identities, traditional symbols, or honorary titles to increase their legitimacy. This is a form of symbolic capital that strengthens the claim that they are “native leaders” or legitimate representatives of the community. In the practice of dynastic politics at the local level, strengthening cultural symbols and local identities is an important strategy to obtain and maintain the legitimacy of power. Dynastic politicians often use traditional symbols, honorary titles, or historical narratives about their regional origins to strengthen their image as “local sons” or authentic representatives of local communities. The use of these elements functions as symbolic capital, borrowing a term from Pierre Bourdieu that emphasizes their position not only as formal officials but also as heirs to local cultural values and traditions. By claiming this cultural closeness, dynastic politicians can build emotional closeness with the community, create identity-based loyalty, and reduce political challenges from outside figures. In this context, cultural symbols are not merely political decorations but also ideological instruments that emphasize the legitimacy of their power in the eyes of the people.

Use of Modern Campaign Strategies

In the digital era, politicians, including political dynasty actors, no longer rely solely on conventional campaign methods such as face-to-face meetings, billboards, or direct meetings. They have begun to adapt to digital technology to reach voters more widely, quickly, and efficiently. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp have become the main tools for shaping images, spreading political narratives, and building engagement with the community.

This digital adaptation is not only about online presence but also includes how political dynasties repackage cultural symbols and local identities in digital formats—for example, through visual content that displays traditional activities, the use of local languages, and narratives of family history as “servants of the people. This strategy expands the reach of their symbolic capital to young voters and the digital diaspora.

Moreover, the use of local influencers, micro-targeting of political ads, and big data allows dynasty politicians to adjust campaign messages according to the preferences and psychographic tendencies of the community. This adaptation shows how political dynasties do not only rely on traditional strengths, but are also responsive to the dynamics of technology and changes in voter behavior in the digital era. Thus, digital adaptation becomes a new arena in local political contestation, while strengthening the dominance of dynasties in a more subtle but effective way.

In the context of the digital era, Yoes Kenawas also highlighted how kinship politicians began to use social media and digital political marketing to shape the image of political families as modern, competent, and popular. This strategy targets the younger generation and urban voters. In the digital era, kinship politics not only relies on traditional social relations but also utilizes information and communication technology to strengthen and expand its political influence. This digital adaptation includes several aspects:

1. Use of Social Media as a Means of Communication

Kinship politicians utilize platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp to build direct relationships with constituents, spread political narratives, and manage public image. Social media allows for faster, cheaper campaigns and reaches a wider group of voters, especially the younger generation.

2. Digital Branding and Image Management

Through curated digital content, political families manage public perception by highlighting personal advantages, social programs, and leadership visions. And political influencers and digital buzzers are often used to strengthen campaign messages and counter criticism.

3. Utilization of Big Data and Political Analytics

Using voter data and digital behavior to specifically target political messages, increase campaign effectiveness, and identify potential risks.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of kinship politics, or political dynasties, in Indonesia is not just a matter of blood relations or personal inheritance of power but rather a structured, adaptive, and continuously developing political strategy in the context of local democracy. This article shows that political actors who are members of family networks are able to secure power through various strategic approaches that are carried out simultaneously and are interrelated. Kinship politics, in this context, becomes a dominant mechanism to maintain control over political and economic resources in the region while limiting the space for competition for actors outside the family network.

One of the main strategies identified is the reproduction of power through elections and political parties, where family members are encouraged to advance in electoral contests with the full support of family networks and previously built political infrastructure. Political parties in many cases do not function as selective institutions based on merit but rather become vehicles for dynasties to maintain the existence of power legitimately and repeatedly. This process is further strengthened by the placement of loyalists and relatives in the bureaucratic structure, which creates a closed circle of power and ensures the smooth distribution of programs and policy-making that benefits political families.

In addition, the mobilization of consumers and patrons is very important in kinship strategies. Social and cultural ties help strengthen the exchange of protection or access to resources in exchange for political loyalty by supporting them. Often, community support depends more on emotional ties, reciprocity, and trust in leaders who are considered to have helped the community than on rational ideas. Kinship politics has developed into a solid social institution that is difficult to replace. In addition, essential to the sustainable impact of political dynasties is their ability to modernize their political narratives and adapt to contemporary technology.

Social media, digital branding strategies, and the use of local influencers, without losing their traditional grassroots base, have brought political dynasties closer to young and middle-class voters. This adaptation shows that family-based authority is a framework that is ready to evolve with the times, not a rigid and outdated institution.

Using the Family Organizational Capabilities (FOCs) framework by Yoes C. Kenawas, it is clear that political families that survive are those that can clearly divide roles among family members, manage internal conflicts, and interact with external forces such as political parties, bureaucracies, and economic networks so that they systematically and collectively manage power. This approach makes kinship politics one of the most flexible forms of power available in Indonesian local democracy. Therefore, the main claim of this study is that family politics demonstrates the adaptive potential of local elites in utilizing democratic institutions to maintain power from generation to generation, thereby overcoming the symbol of democratic vulnerability. In addition to public awareness of the need for leadership regeneration based on competence rather than family, institutional adjustments, especially in political parties and bureaucracy, are needed to understand and control the dominance of political dynasties.

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