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The Problems of Kinship Politics and the Challenges of Achieving the Ultimate Goal of Regional Autonomy

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Abstract: The presence of the phenomenon of kinship politics in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections triggers a controversy that revolves around its implementation. The existence of kinship politics is feared to have an impact on efforts to achieve the ultimate goal of regional autonomy, namely public's welfare and a dignified quality of life. The purpose of this research is to map the potential problems and identify the challenges of achieving the ultimate goal of regional autonomy. This research uses a literature study as an analytical tool to answer the objectives of the study. Discussions about kinship politics in Indonesia present a perceptual dichotomy, where on the one hand this is not a problem when the local leadership of kinship politics is able to bring prosperity together. However, on the other hand, this can become a problem when political actors abuse power that perpetuates the strengthening of the oligarchy and ignores the original goal of decentralization, namely, to bring prosperity and a dignified quality of life. Candidates who are affiliated with kinship politics face a fairly formidable challenge, namely, to strengthen regional competitiveness in a sustainable manner based on the principle of transparency in order to maintain public trust during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: political decentralization; regional autonomy; *pilkada*; kinship politics

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I. Introduction

The presence of the phenomenon of kinship politics in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections has sparked a controversy that revolves around the implementation level. Concerns about the existence of kinship are feared to have a negative impact on strengthening regional competitiveness which is hampered by the corruptive tendencies in this scenario. This research will show how the challenges of regional heads who are in the vortex of kinship politics are to prove that the issue of dynasties does not always determine regional competitiveness.

The 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections (*Pilkada*) are the momentum of local democracy party as part of the implementation of political decentralization. At the implementation level, the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Election contestation presents a variety of interesting dramas in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Political decentralization as one of the dimensions of the implementation of regional autonomy for 20 years seems to have gone well. However, there are still controversies that arise during the implementation of political decentralization in Indonesia, one of which is the presence of the phenomenon of kinship politics.

In general, kinship politics refers to a condition in which several members by blood or marriage are often in several generations or several siblings are involved in political contestation. Kinship politics is evident in every country where inequality is sometimes seen in the practice of political power. This gap is the reason for the presence of resistance in the people, but in certain conditions, the people seem powerless to face the desires of the dynasty by the political elite.

The 2020 Regional Head Elections present a local democratic contestation that is full of nuances of kinship politics. Family circles in the national government environment to family members of regional incumbents are competing to reach regional leadership seats. The issue of kinship politics is often denied by the contestants on the basis that everyone has the right to be elected. The track record that often becomes the preference of voters can be distorted by the offer of references in the form of blood ties to the incumbent. [Corstange \(2018\)](#) states that patronage-oriented voters give greater weight to the candidate's kinship affiliation and do not emphasize other attributes such as morality, ability, and issue position. In the end, familism as

Table 1. Dynasties Political Affiliated Corruption Cases

No.	Case	Description
1	Atut dynasty in Banten (Banten Governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah, Tubagus Chaeri Wardana alias Wawan)	Corruption in the procurement of medical equipment at the Banten Referral Hospital in the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget for 2012 Fiscal Year and the 2012 Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget Amendments that harmed the state finances amounting to Rp79.789 billion.
2	Kutai Kertanegara dynasty (Syaukani Hassan Rais-Rita Widayarsi)	Cases of misuse of funds to stimulate the levy of natural resources (oil and gas), funds for the feasibility study of Kutai Airport, funds for the construction of Kutai Airport, and misuse of funds from the public's welfare budget post.
3	Cimahi dynasty (Atty Suharti-Itoc Tochija)	The bribery case was related to the market development project in Cimahi, with a total project value of Rp 57 billion.
4	Klaten dynasty (Sri Hartini)	He became a suspect related to the trading of the positions in Klaten. The leadership in the regency has never been separated from the husband-and-wife pair since 2000.
5	Kendari dynasty (Adriatma Dwi Putra-Asrun)	The bribery case for the procurement of goods and services within the Kendari Regency Government in 2017-2018.

the basis for kinship politics invalidates competence as a touchstone and instead sees figures as the key.

[Mariana and Husin \(2017\)](#) mention that the practice of dynastic politics is not only prone to corruption but also hijacks public participation. Political decentralization reforms and shifts in electoral incentives have resulted in an election-related cycle of rent-seeking in the form of corruption by officials. Relations in kinship politics give rise to the need to perpetuate patron-client relations and monopolize the electoral system in order to maintain the status quo. The practice of kinship politics in Indonesia (in this case the case in Banten Province) in [Hamid \(2014\)](#) shows that family politics has become the single most important actor that determines the distribution of political power and economic resources at the local level. Thus, political power is distributed within family members while the role of political parties is relatively limited. Of course, this will lead to the creation of gaps in local democracy practices in the era of decentralization.

The corruption case involving the dynastic political vortex is a reflection of the problems of local democracy in the region. Referring to the Kompas article summarized in [Table 1](#), there were seven cases of corruption committed by regional heads affiliated with dynastic politics until 2018 ([Belarminus, 2018](#)). As a result, there are a number of state material losses on the impact side. Permits corruption is evidence that dynastic politics creates problems when the authority of the regional head is misused for personal and

dynastic interests. The thesis is reflected in [Table 1](#), where there is an abuse of power related to the administration of permits to corrupt behavior in regional development.

The problems that arise over the local democracy gap will have an impact on efforts to achieve the ultimate goal of regional autonomy, namely the welfare and quality of life of the people. Kinship politics has dominant control over coercive and economic resources within certain territorial jurisdictions. This unequal distribution of public goods and services increases the economic disparity between citizens which leads to poverty. [Sujarwoto \(2015\)](#) argues that kinship politics distort efforts to reduce poverty in Indonesia during the decentralization period.

Reflecting on the cases that occurred in the Philippines and Thailand, dynastic politics is often associated with the patronage of figures. [Roces \(2000\)](#) notes that the Philippines' bipartisan political climate opened up space for competition between families and eventually led to the economic and political downturn. The Republican Period (1945–1972) saw the Philippines' marginal economic prosperity sucked away by politicians and families who were then criticized for corruption and collusion. Likewise, with Thailand, personal ties and patron-client relationships characterize contemporary Thai politics, but women's political positions are more peripheral in Thailand than in Indonesia and the Philippines ([Dewi, 2012](#)). The political experience of the Shinawatra family dynasty also led to the disruption of economic stability in the country.

In general, the conditions of the Philippines and Thailand have similarities with Indonesia in terms of political morphology. These three democracy countries in Southeast Asia face similar problems in dealing with dynastic political problems. However, the difference lies in the implementation of decentralization where local governments in Indonesia have broader authority than local governments in Thailand and the Philippines. Then, the political potential of the Indonesian dynasty is more clearly visible at the local government level than at the national level.

The practice of corruption in the dynastic political vortex will present high-cost economic problems. One of the factors believed to be able to hinder economic growth in the region is the high-cost economy. Indonesia loses if it has to compete in terms of investment with neighboring countries due to the high-cost economy in economic activities. [Kosim and Marwa \(2009\)](#) stated that the high-cost economy is an economic

process that requires and/or costs higher than normal costs due to the imposition of higher tariffs or illegal levies and as a result of a corruption culture. The high-cost economy causes a region to be unable to compete with other regions in its economic development and ultimately hinders the implementation of economic decentralization in the region.

The integrity of local leadership will determine the quality of the success of political decentralization in the regions. Corruption as a manifestation of the fading integrity of local leadership can disrupt the development process that is running in the regions. Corruption behavior can hinder the process of implementing economic decentralization (privatization and collaboration) which leads to delays in improving the public's welfare in the regions.

Corruption can hamper economic growth both locally and nationally. [Graeser and Meier \(1965\)](#) stated that if an economic project is carried out and the process is full of elements of corruption (bribery to win the project, nepotism in the tender process, embezzlement in its implementation, and other forms of corruption in the project), then economic growth as the expected spillover effect of the project will not be achieved. The hampered economic growth will lead to the inhibition of the achievement of public's welfare as the ultimate goal of regional autonomy. Corruption behavior will actually present economic and social disparities because most of the wealth will ultimately be controlled and flow to those who are in the vortex of corruption.

The existence of kinship politics in local democracy has the potential to threaten efforts to increase competitiveness in the region. Poverty, as a reflection of weak economic productivity, indicates that there are problems related to the competitiveness of a region. Regional competitiveness is hampered as a consequence of the presence of kinship politics practices that are full of nuances of inequality, both in terms of power and economic interests.

Indeed, efforts to increase regional competitiveness rely on the pillars of sustainability, one of which is governance. The Regional Autonomy Watch (KPPOD) in the 2020 Sustainable Regional Competitiveness Index (IDSDB) research report places governance as one of the pillars for establishing sustainable regional competitiveness. Decentralization should contribute to opening up the opportunity structure for the creation of new sources of growth and centers of economic activity through good

governance. Good governance will be created through a chain of local democracy processes that are built on competency competition, not familism.

Flowing from this context, this article intends to observe the phenomenon of kinship politics with the aim of mapping potential problems and identifying the challenges of achieving the ultimate goal of regional autonomy, namely public's welfare. The starting point of the analysis will be based on the mapping of the results of the Regional Head Elections juxtaposed with the current state of regional competitiveness. This research is aimed at the question: how is the challenge of achieving the ultimate goal of regional autonomy for regional heads who are affiliated with dynastic politics after the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections? With such presentation, this article based on KPPOD's research also complements various studies of kinship politics in other regions. Of course, the output of this research is expected to be an input for the government to bring about an acceleration of welfare in the regions led by kinship politics.

Dynasty politics is actually the enemy of democracy, but this is unavoidable at the implementation level. Ideally, the Indonesian state belongs to all its citizens, not dominated by certain groups or families. [Mukti and Rodiyah \(2020\)](#) stated that thus, every citizen has the right to be elected to sit as a public official as long as the people want. [Dal Bó et al. \(2017\)](#) mention that dynastic politics raises concerns that inequalities in the distribution of political power may reflect imperfections in democratic representation. By its very nature, dynastic politics entails the preservation of power, which goes against the guiding principle of the Declaration of Independence that all human beings are created equal ([Cranston, 2016](#)).

Dynastic politics and political dynasties have differences at the level of definition. [Gunanto \(2020\)](#) defines dynastic politics as an effort to perpetuate power by the oligarchs through a process of mobilization and regeneration. The positive thing in dynastic politics is that there is room for succession in planning and implementing development for the long term because there is no difference in the vision of development with political rivals. Politics in Indonesia tends to bring about changes in development planning when the democratic contestation is won by political rivals. The negative side of dynastic politics itself is the Carnegie effect where those who have inherited

power no longer have a hard effort to get it ([Daniele & Geys, 2014](#)).

Gunanto also defines political dynasties as a system of power reproduction that is determined by the principle of familism (kinship). Political dynasties have a positive side where political maturity can be transferred quickly within the family; because it is already popular, the level of public trust is relatively higher compared to newcomers who are not clear. However, the existence of political dynasties forms a circulation of power that tends to be clogged and only for those who have popularity and the absence of check-balances when power in certain areas is controlled by a family ([Susanti, 2017](#)).

The practice of dynastic politics occurs in a number of countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, and the United States. The practice in the United States shows a general characteristic where there is the emergence of family members in the political contestation of the next period due to reasonable and rational political factors. Meanwhile, the pattern of dynastic politics in the Philippines and Thailand collaborates intensely with money politics, media capitalism, and patronage culture to boost appearances and gain political justification ([Pasan, 2013](#)).

This study will discuss the problems of dynastic politics in an effort to achieve the ultimate goal of regional autonomy in Indonesia. This departs from a condition where efforts to perpetuate power have an association with elite capture issues at the empirical level. [Bardhan and Mookherjee \(2005\)](#) stated that there is a threat of elite capture in government programs in implementing decentralization. The three threats include corruption, allocation inefficiency, as well as unhealthy institutions, and decay of local governments. This elite capture potential is prone to occur, especially for regions with abundant endowment potential. With or without kinship politics, it is actually the issue of capacity and morality of local leadership that will determine the direction of regional competitiveness development.

The Regional Autonomy Watch (KPPOD) conducts research on regional competitiveness in 2020. The determinants of regional competitiveness leverage are influenced by the performance and leadership of Regional Heads and bureaucratic services are key in managing resources and responding to existing challenges ([Suparman et al., 2020](#)). These findings indicate that the performance and quality of regional heads will affect the competitiveness of a region.

II. Methods

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a literature study method. The literature study method is used to describe the reality and the correlation across phenomena studied accurately and systematically based on evidence. The data were obtained from various theories, perspectives, and several journals that are inherent in this research. Exploration of the potential implications of dynastic politics relies on the synthesis of literature and data collected from books, scientific articles, study reports, and mass media reports.

The data used in this study are the results of the 2020 Sustainable Regional Competitiveness Index (IDSDB), data from the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections, and data on a series of corruption cases from the mass media. Analysis of the potential problems of political kinship is faced with the topography of regional competitiveness. 2020 Sustainable Regional Competitiveness Index (IDSDB) data was obtained from 356 regencies throughout Indonesia so that the object of this research is regencies that are indicated to be within the scope of kinship politics. Regencies were selected as jurisdictions and government administrative entities that have abundant natural resources (forest, oil and gas, mineral and coal, agriculture) as strategic sectors to assess the inclusiveness of governance and the dimensions of regional sustainability.

III. Results and Discussion

A. The 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Election Results

This research aims to examine the practice of kinship politics in a number of regencies in Indonesia. Tempo in its article in 2020 stated that there were nine candidates in eight regencies who were indicated to carry out kinship politics (Riana, 2020). The involvement of a number of candidates in the kinship politics circle shows that this practice is still ongoing in the reform era. The nine candidates indicated to be involved in kinship politics are described in Table 2.

Referring to the data in Table 2, there are several typologies formed on the composition of contestants who are affiliated with kinship politics. The first typology, the incumbent nuclear family, includes Kustini Sri Purnomo-Danang Maharsa (Sleman Regency), Benny Dwifa Yuswir-Iraddatillah (Sijunjung Regency), Ipuk Fiestiandani-Sugirah (Banyuwangi Regency),

Table 2. Candidates Affiliated with Kinship Politics

Name of Candidate Pairs	Regency	Kinship Status
Ipuk Fiestiandani-Sugirah	Banyuwangi Regency	Ipuk Fiestiandani is the wife of Banyuwangi Regent, Azwar Anas
Safitri Malik Soulisa-Gerson Eliaser Selsily	South Buru Regency	Safitri is the wife of the South Buru Regent, Tagop Sudarsono Soulisa
Rezita Melyani-Junaidi Rachmat	Indragiri Hulu Regency	Rezita Melyani is the wife of Indragiri Hulu Regent, Yopi Arianto
Hanindhito Himawan Pramana-Dewi Mariya Ulfa	Kediri Regency	Hanindhito Himawan is the son of Cabinet Secretary, Pramono Anung
Muhammad Yusron Lagogau-Syahban Sammana	Pangkajene and Islands Regency	Yusron Lagogau is the nephew of Pangkajene and Islands Regent, Syamsudin A. Hamid
Andi Ilham-Rismayani	Pangkajene and Islands Regency	Andi Ilham-Rismayani is Syamsudin's brother-in-law and wife
Ratu Tatu Chasanah-Pandji Tirtayasa	Serang Regency	Ratu Tatu Chasanah is the younger sister of the former Governor of Banten, Ratu Atut Chosiyah, and the sister-in-law of the current Mayor of South Tangerang, Airin Rachmi Diany
Benny Dwifa Yuswir-Iraddatillah	Sijunjung Regency	Benny is the son of Sijunjung Regent, Yuswir Arifin
Kustini Sri Purnomo-Danang Maharsa	Sleman Regency	Kustini is the wife of Sleman Regent, Sri Purnomo

Safitri Malik Soulisa-Gerson Eliaser Selsily (South Buru Regency), and Rezita Melyani-Junaidi Rachmat (Indragiri Hulu District). The second typology, namely the nuclear family of central government officials, where the candidate in question is Hanindhito Himawan Pramana-Dewi Mariya Ulfa (Kediri Regency). The third typology is the extended family, which includes the Muhammad Yusron Lagogau-Syahban Sammana pair and the Andi Ilham-Rismayani pair (Pangkajene and Islands Regency) and Ratu Tatu Chasanah-Pandji Tirtayasa (Serang Regency).

The variations in the number of votes in the 2020 democracy party color the local political constellation and become an instrument of legitimacy for the existence of kinship politics in the reform era. The results of the 2020 contest will be the center of attention that will determine the quality of local democracy in the era of decentralization. Table 3 presents the percentage gain of the Regional Head Elections votes followed by candidates who are indicated to have affiliation with kinship politics.

The political constellation presented in the celebration of this democracy party presents the fact that the majority of candidates who are affiliated with kinship politics gain victory. The majority of these candidates won, but the victory

Table 3. The Vote Results by Candidates Who Are Indicated to Have Kinship Political Affiliation in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections

Candidates	City/Regency	Results	Vote Percentage
Ipuk Fiestiandani-Sugrah	Banyuwangi Regency	Won	52.60%
Safitri Malik Souliisa-Gerson Eliaser Selsily	South Buru Regency	Won	43.30%
Rezita Melyani-Junaidi Rachmat	Indragiri Hulu Regency	Won	26.50%
Hanindhito Himawan Pramana-Dewi Mariya Uifa	Kediri Regency	Won	76.50%
Muhammad Yusron Lagogau-Syahban Sammana	Pangkajene and Islands Regency	Won	36.60%
Andi Ilham-Rismayani	Pangkajene and Islands Regency	Lost	20.09%
Ratu Tatu Chasanah-Pandji Tirtayasa	Serang Regency	Won	63.40%
Benny Dwifa Yuswir-Iraddatillah	Sijunjung Regency	Won	25.10%
Kustini Sri Purnomo-Danang Maharsa	Sleman Regency	Won	38.30%

obtained was not entirely absolute. The candidate who faced an empty box (the pair of Hanindhito-Dewi) also won with a significant number. Of the nine candidates in [Table 3](#), only one candidate lost, namely the pair Andi Ilham-Rismayani (Pangkajene and Islands Regency). However, the defeat was not something special because the pair was defeated by another candidate who was also affiliated with kinship politics (the pair of Muhammad Yusron Lagogau-Syahban Sammana). Another fact, Ratu Tatu managed to maintain the reins of leadership in Serang Regency. This legitimizes the findings of [Mendoza et al. \(2012\)](#) which suggests that candidates who are affiliated with kinship politics have a greater chance of winning the general election contestation.

The process of victory in each region of course has a varied story. For example, in Banten, the political victory of the Ratu Tatu-Pandji Tirtayasa pair was influenced by the support of the warriors' performance in the contestation process. The domination of the Ratu's family starts from the charismatic source of power as a warrior, followed by the mastery of economic and political resources ([Kusumaningtyas et al., 2017](#)). The support of the warriors in the contestation process is identical to the political climate of Banten so that it can be seen that the actual involvement of the warriors in the contestation is a means which is allegedly a steppingstone in efforts to perpetuate power.

Another phenomenon can be seen in Sleman, where the victory of the Kustini-Danang pair was influenced by the achievements of the previous government which was still part of the Kustini's family. Nevertheless, there is still potential for dynastic politics and even to build a political dynasty in the future. Sleman's good achievements in the 2020 IDSDB are expected to be a reminder for the Kustini-Danang pair to be able to carry out their mandate and not reinforce the negative stigma of political freedom in the family (continuing the position of family members).

The similarity of the two phenomena is that the pair was born from an indication of dynastic political affiliation. However, the processes and background records of the two pairs differ on an empirical level. Therefore, the process of obtaining victory in this study is considered *ceteris paribus* because, in politics, all means can be used to perpetuate power.

The use of the 2020 IDSDB results in this study is not intended to see causality or statistical influence on dynastic politics. This is due to the potential for dynastic politics that can occur anywhere and anytime. The 2020 IDSDB is used to see the mapping of regional typologies that are indicated to have affiliation with kinship politics at the regency level in Indonesia. This typology is expected to be a reference point for the performance of the winners of the Regional Head Election contestation to prove that the indications of dynastic politics attached to them will not lead to a decline in regional competitiveness.

The results of the contestation in [Table 3](#) show that all candidates who are affiliated with kinship politics managed to gain victory. In view of the conditions and typology formed, the candidates indicated to be affiliated with kinship politics came from regions with varying regional economic potential and competitiveness. Referring to the 2020 IDSDB, the national average of the sustainable regional competitiveness index in 2020 is 52.519. Of the eight districts, only two are below the national average, while the rest are above the national average. [Table 4](#) shows the results of the 2020 IDSDB in regions with candidates affiliated with kinship politics.

The pillar of a sustainable environment as a form of sustainable regional competitiveness is also a concern for the regional development agenda. Referring to the results of the IDSDB, Indragiri Hulu Regency is the regency with the highest score on this sustainable environment pillar. On the other hand, Sijunjung Regency is the regency with the lowest score on this pillar.

Table 4. The 2020 IDSDB Scores in Regions with Candidates Affiliated with Kinship Politics in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections

Regency	Ranks	IDSDB Score	Sustainable Environment	Resilient Economy	Social Inclusion	Good Governance
Kediri Regency	4	62.073	57.455	60.949	57.595	73.611
Indragiri Hulu Regency	23	58.708	59.215	63.111	55.823	56.944
Sleman Regency	27	58.279	55.259	51.669	50.155	80.556
Banyuwangi Regency	45	57.489	55.01	46.9	56.45	75
Pangkajene and Islands Regency	125	54.52	52.014	52.913	60.827	52.778
Sijunjung Regency	171	53.199	47.903	44.581	60.01	62.5
Serang Regency	222	51.549	48.93	46.261	51.046	61.111
South Buru Regency	327	45.884	55.631	24.433	61.79	52.778

Conceptually, the pillar of a sustainable environment is a feature of development based on natural resource management as an integral part of the actualization of the quality of life across generations. This concept needs to be considered as part of the local leadership's efforts to realize a dignified quality of life for the people.

Another pillar, namely the pillar of a resilient economy, describes the efforts of local governments in presenting economic resilience as a guarantee for the demands of welfare in the period of autonomy. The 2020 IDSDB results show that Indragiri Hulu Regency has the best economic resilience compared to other regions. On the other hand, South Buru Regency occupies the lowest position in this index. The concept of a resilient economy itself is seen as Economic sustainability as seen in the general performance of macro indicators which include the creation of added value, capital accumulation, sectoral contribution, purchasing power, and infrastructure development.

Furthermore, the social inclusion pillar in the index wants to comprehensively examine the efforts of local governments in presenting social inclusiveness as part of the framework for sustainable regional competitiveness. Pangkajene and Islands Regency occupies the best position in the 2020 IDSDB compared to other regions affiliated with kinship politics. Sleman Regency itself ranks the lowest in this pillar. The social inclusion pillar emphasizes the importance of developing human capital and access to economic opportunities as part of efforts to improve the quality of life.

Finally, the 2020 IDSDB also views good governance as one of the pillars of supporting sustainable regional competitiveness. The output

of the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections plays a major role in this pillar as part of the local leadership that guides the direction and basis for increasing sustainable regional competitiveness in the region. Sleman Regency ranks top in the category in Table 4. On the other hand, Pangkajene and Islands Regency and South Buru Regency get the lowest index in the ranking in Table 4. The concept of good governance in this index is interpreted as the essence of forming a development ecosystem through actor accountability, system transparency, as well as public participation as a supporting element for the performance of the public sector in the regions. This is in line with the report from the [Ministry of Home Affairs \(2020\)](#) regarding the number of regional innovations in 2019 where Banyuwangi, Sleman, and Kediri regencies have a good number of regional innovations, even Banyuwangi is ranked second in Indonesia with a total of 186 innovations.

Flowing from the context presented, Regional Head Election results in regions with candidates affiliated with political kinship become a question for the winners of the contestation, and how will they be committed to increasing regional competitiveness in the future? When referring to the ultimate goal of regional autonomy, the welfare and quality of life of the community become the touchstone for the success of the leadership of "kinship politics". On the other hand, failure to provide quality of life for constituents will increase public distrust in various political agendas. In the end, the Regional Head Elections as the actualization of political decentralization will be considered a failure in realizing the ultimate goal of regional autonomy.

B. The Problem of Kinship Politics

The kinship politics that characterizes the political constellation of the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections also presents a negative precedent in the public audience. On the one hand, this bad precedent has become a weapon for political opponents by echoing the narrative of rejecting dynastic politics. However, candidates who are indicated to carry out kinship politics often deny their involvement in the effort to build a political dynasty. The pros and cons that are rolling in the midst of the turmoil on the issue of kinship politics leave one reflective question, will the existence of kinship politics interfere with efforts to achieve the ultimate goal of regional autonomy?

The emergence of the kinship politics phenomenon in the local democratic contestations is marked by the involvement of the incumbent's wife, children, and relatives. The participation of the incumbent's relatives in the contestation triggers the formation of an elite circulation that dwells among the ruling family and closes opportunities for alternative candidates outside the elite group. Susanti (2017) said that strengthening political connections built by kinship politics also closed opportunities for political recruitment for people outside the kinship circle. The problems of kinship politics are not in line with the spirit of democracy which prioritizes participation and representation in local democracy.

Local democracy as part of the implementation of political decentralization in the era of autonomy is expected to be able to form competitive local leadership. The problematic fact is that the victories of candidates who are affiliated with kinship politics have the potential to create a small oligarchy in the regions. Empirical evidence for this thesis is the existence of the Ratu Atut Political Dynasty which presents the fact of how dangerous it is when power is dominated by one family lineage. Smith (2012) stated that kinship politics actually developed in the era of democratization because of the superiority of the incumbent and the election system that was centralized on the character of the candidate.

The typology that emerged over the results of the 2020 Regional Head Elections still shows a continuity of patterns as a consequence of the perpetuation of kinship politics. Ratu Tatu's victory in the Serang Regional Head Election further strengthened the strength of the political dynasty that had long resided in Banten. The significance

of the results with the problematic facts in the field actually ordained the pattern of kinship politics as a chain that is difficult to break. The results of the "clean sweep" in the eight regencies that became the object of this study show that there are indications where the public as a determining entity for democracy is unable to withstand the flow of kinship politics in the region.

The first typology, namely the typology of the incumbent nuclear family, is still a favorite trend in the contestation of democracy party in the regions. The problem that may arise in this typology is the formation of a circle of power that leads to corrupt behavior. Political dynasties formed from nuclear families have become potential hotbeds for the fertile practice of corruption, collusion, and nepotism. Akbari et al. (2019) explained that essentially support for relatives and members in the group came naturally. It is this nature of support that ultimately helps to form the chain of kinship politics on the basis of natural support across family members.

The concept of a nuclear family basically consists of a father, mother, and children. The essence of this family certainly brings closeness to every family member in it. Kinship, as the strongest social bond, is seen as the basis on which 'primitive' society maintains order. This is in line with statement from Overing et al. (2015) states that kinship ties create social solidarity relationships. Similarly, Suryatwan (2020) emphasized that political dynasties were used as a means to perpetuate power and reap material benefits through political positions held. Trust in wife or children to continue the reins of power contributes to fertilizing kinship politics in local democracy. Finally, power will rotate in the family circle, even the circle of residents of the same house. This will limit the presence of alternative local leadership from groups outside the circle.

The second typology, namely the nuclear family that has relations with the national government, is an interesting typology to observe. The family relationship between regional head candidates and officials in the national government presents two scenarios. First, it is possible that national government officials want to sharpen their grip on the regional level by securing influence in the regions. Second, regeneration by ensuring that family members are able to lead the local government before moving on to the national level. Both scenarios can be read as strategic steps to secure power at the regional level without the need to go directly to the regions.

The third typology, namely candidates with extensive family kinship, in this case, brother-in-law, son-in-law, and others. As a large part of kinship politics, this typology has a tendency to be used as an option to expand the grip of the oligarchs when the grip at the nuclear family level is strong enough. The octopus of the Ratu Atut dynasty in Banten Province is an example where the participation of the son-in-law in the local democratic contestation takes place when the nuclear family has planted the foundation of a political dynasty. The case of Banten shows that the political family has become the single most important actor determining the distribution of political power and economic resources at the local level. Regarding these problems, [Hamid \(2014\)](#) emphasized that political power is distributed within family members while the role of political parties is relatively limited.

Overall, the widespread practice of kinship politics cannot be separated from the trust instilled by incumbents on relatives who are involved in local democratic contestation. Hamid also noted that political kinship actors are actively expanding the political power of the family in the local government executive environment by targeting the seat of the head or deputy head of the region. Local political actors set a pattern that makes family affiliation the basis for the expansion of political power. [Labonne et al. \(2021\)](#) mention that family ties are an important vehicle for access to the political scene, both in developed and developing countries.

An interesting finding in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections is the victory of candidates who are affiliated with kinship politics in all regencies that are the object of research. The incumbent's kinship and character are allegedly one of the determinants behind these results. Candidates who have kinship relations with the incumbent have many advantages in the form of a candidate's popularity and electability levels that are boosted through the influence of the previous ruler. [Lewis et al. \(2020\)](#) mention that the belief of the Indonesian people in local politicians does not seem to always be based on a well-founded principle. They are eager to re-elect incumbents, in general, and especially when the incumbent's service performance is better than average.

In essence, kinship politics cannot be separated from familism. Familism in the perspective of political culture is seen as

overdependence on kinship ties that give birth to the habit of placing family members and kinship ties in government political positions. The notion of familism that developed in the dynastic political circulation also determined the perpetuation of the practice of kinship politics in Indonesia. Kinship politics as a result of the practice of familism in the local elite will have an impact on the birth of a local oligarchy that closes the opportunity for other people to lead a region.

If you look back, in fact, the regulations of the Indonesian democracy party have been regulated in Law no. 8 of 2015 concerning Regional Head Elections. However, the Constitutional Court's Decision Number 33/PUU-XIII/2015 granted the judicial review suit and removed the article limiting the prohibition on the involvement of the incumbent's family in the law. Consequently, the application of dynastic politics is indirectly legalized in Indonesian positive law. [Mukti and Rodiyah \(2020\)](#) said that dynastic politics is also a product of human rights related to political rights, namely the right to be elected and to vote. The argument used by the Constitutional Court is to bear the status of the incumbent's family as something natural and kinship politics is not a problem if the people want the candidate to lead their region. This is also in line with the principle that every citizen has the right to be elected and to vote in a democratic contestation.

The Constitutional Court also presented the argument that there was no research that was able to prove a correlation between morals and corrupt behavior with the incumbent's family. The corruption case that occurred during the term of office of the regional head is a casuistic event. Kinship ties do not always reflect one's leadership potential and capacity so that in this case, kinship politics does not become taboo.

Kinship politics will not actually present a problem if there is no conflict of interest in the local leadership. Conflicts of interest often occur in most officials who are affiliated with kinship politics. This arrangement has a conflict of interest so that it has the potential to cause legal problems in the future. The Constitutional Court stated that the provisions prohibiting conflicts of interest with incumbents made a significant difference in terms of treatment based solely on a person's birth and kinship status. [Anggariani \(2013\)](#) states that kinship politics opens up opportunities for opposition and coalition competition based on family relations and group interests.

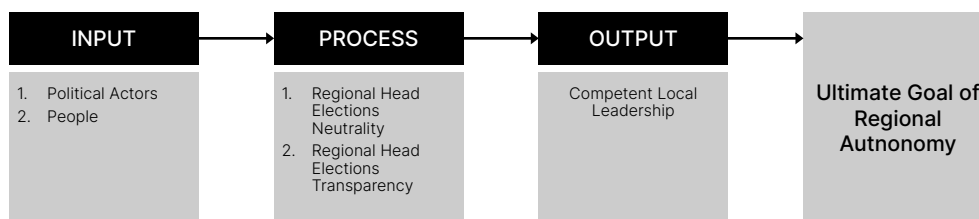


Figure 1. Stages of Input-process-output in Local Democracy Problems

C. Kinship Politics Vs Achieving the Ultimate Goal of Regional Autonomy

The debate that occurs as part of the problem of kinship political affiliation can actually end with amplification of the public perspective by using an output-based approach. Local leadership as a result of the actualization of political decentralization must ensure the achievement of public's welfare. Of course, this is the duty of every regional head, regardless of whether or not there is affiliation with kinship politics. It is not impossible, regional heads born from kinship affiliations actually bring together prosperity (*bonum communa*). On the other hand, regional heads who during the campaign period rejected kinship politics actually caused harm in their local leadership process.

The problem of corrupt behavior is not only related to indications of dynastic political affiliation. The Regional Head Election of South Sulawesi Province presented the winner, namely Nurdin Abdullah with a background in technocratic leadership and achievements while serving as Regent of Bantaeng. However, in 2021 he was arrested by the Corruption Eradication Commission due to a bribery case at the project auction. These empirical facts also give the impression that corrupt behavior is not always identified with dynastic politics. Moving on from this reality, there is actually hope that kinship politics can bring benefits through the integrity of local leadership and the achievement of strengthening regional competitiveness.

The problem mapping of leadership with kinship nuances can be described comprehensively through an input-process-output approach. Political actors and the people as holders of sovereignty are input components in kinship politics in Indonesia. Purwaningsih (2015) stated that the quality of input can be measured in the competency variable which includes the quality of the candidate in this article covering three variables, namely education, training, and political experience possessed by the candidate. Thus, solving the problems of kinship politics is

not only concerned with the background of political actors. Moreover, leadership literacy at the people level must be ensured to be able to support democracy party so that they are able to produce competent regional heads, not just existences. Perludem (2020) stated that the average public access to information is also not good at recognizing who the candidate is.

The implementation of the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections can be seen as a unified process that bridges between political actors and the goals to be achieved as outputs. Of course, in this process, the neutrality of the implementation of the democracy party is the key to the optimal role of the process in achieving the main objectives of regional autonomy. The Regional Head Elections that are transparent and neutral will certainly participate in presenting local leadership that brings benefits to the people. The election of candidates with indications of kinship political affiliation through neutral Regional Head Elections will certainly reflect the will of the people as part of democracy (*vox populi vox dei*). On the other hand, the Regional Head Election process which is full of fraud will set a bad precedent if it is won by a candidate who is affiliated with political kinship. Ari Dwipayana said that the function of power control was weak and not running effectively, so the possibility of power deviations such as corruption, collusion, and nepotism (Adhitia, 2019).

Finally, at the output level, this is where the position of competent local leadership will support the achievement of the ultimate goal of regional autonomy. Welfare and dignified quality of life are the main goals in the chain of regional autonomy in the dimension of political decentralization. Regardless of the candidate's background, the main issue in the political process is how political actors are able to bring prosperity to the people. The stages of input-process-output in local democracy problems is reflected in Figure 1.

Welfare will essentially be achieved when the people become a productive and competitive social entity. Economic output as an indicator of the success of a region will certainly provide a

spillover effect for efforts to increase welfare. Sustainable regional competitiveness as a narrative of increasing productivity that is built on the foundation of sustainable development requires the participation of regional heads to achieve optimal levels. The role of the pillars of good governance led by regional heads as a result of the Simultaneous Regional Head Elections becomes a touchstone to answer questions about political kinship issues and their usefulness.

Referring to the data in [Table 4](#), the actual practice of kinship politics that took place in the 2020 Regional Head Elections is in regions with competitiveness above the national average. This certainly raises the question for candidates who won political battles through kinship politics schemes, are they able to maintain the achievements of the previous regional heads? Of course, heavy expectations are pinned on those who are affiliated with kinship politics, considering that the people are waiting for policy breakthroughs and increasing competitiveness in the region. This hope is also a challenge to prove that kinship politics is only natural blood relation, not as a means of being opportunist or maintaining power in the past.

Attention to the pillars of a sustainable environment also needs to be strengthened as the actualization of the principles and objectives of sustainable development. Kinship politics should not present opportunities for corruption, especially permits corruption related to environmental sustainability. Environmental permits corruption cases should not occur to political actors involved in kinship politics. Pangkajene and Islands Regency, Sijunjung Regency, Serang Regency, and South Buru Regency have pillar achievements that are still below the national average. This is a challenge for the elected candidates to pay attention to environmental sustainability in their performance after being appointed as proof that kinship politics is not related to the potential for environmental degradation. This potential exists considering that permits approvals and corruption in environmental permits in a number of regions often lead to environmental degradation.

The next homework is how regional heads who are affiliated with kinship politics are able to ensure economic resilience, especially in the face of a pandemic. The scores of Sijunjung Regency, Serang Regency, and South Buru Regency on this pillar are still below the national average (46.036). Useful local leadership is certainly able to increase regional competitiveness and make investment

pick-ups without being tied to bribes, gratuities, and so on.

The enthusiasm of the participants of the democracy party in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections can be said to be very high. [Putri \(2020\)](#) reported that the level of public participation in the 2020 Regional Head Elections was 76.13 percent (data on December 17, 2020) which is quite high. This achievement deserves appreciation considering the high participation that occurred when Indonesia was facing the COVID-19 pandemic. The high participation of the people in the 2020 Regional Head Elections must be paid for by policy breakthroughs that bring together welfare, not certain groups or elites. The recovery from the economic impact of COVID-19 will be a touchstone for elected regional heads to prove that efforts to achieve prosperity are not only focused on fulfilling individual interests.

[Kis-Katos and Sjahrir \(2017\)](#) mention that after the era of autonomy, the economy in the regions (regencies) experienced a substantial increase in fiscal coverage at the regency level from time to time. The increase was broadly comparable across sectors (with a somewhat larger increase in the health sector) while the variation in investment spending between regencies increased most strongly for physical infrastructure. Of course, the successful implementation of simultaneous economic decentralization in Indonesia should be followed by the commitment of kinship politics actors (regional heads) to support efforts to achieve prosperity without abuse of power.

The pillar of social inclusion participates in waiting for the performance of regional heads which are indicated to perpetuate kinship politics. Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) records state that there was a bribery case related to a procurement project at the Banyuasin Regency Education Office by the Regent Yan Anton Ferdian ([Belarminus, 2018](#)). Corruption related to the social inclusion pillar is expected to be a lesson for elected regional heads so that it is avoided in order to maintain the resilience of this pillar. Strengthening this pillar is homework for regional heads in Banyuwangi Regency, Kediri Regency, Indragiri Hulu Regency, and Serang Regency (the score of these four regencies is below the national average for social inclusion pillars of 57,920) to be completed immediately. The community has also been waiting for the commitment to develop social capital as a form of strengthening and support for the simultaneous improvement of regional competitiveness.

The last pillar that intersects with the holding of Simultaneous Regional Head Elections and the actualization of political decentralization is good governance. An interesting fact is presented in this data where the value of the pillars of good governance in a number of regions with regional heads affiliated with kinship politics is very good. The scores of Sleman Regency, Kediri Regency, and Banyuwangi Regency are far above the national average score (54,558) so that this achievement presents expectations for new regional heads to be able to maintain the achievements of this pillar. In contrast, only Serang Regency and Indragiri Hulu Regency have scores below the national average. This is a note for the elected regional heads to improve the performance of good governance in order to break the precedent that kinship politics is synonymous with corruption, considering that corruption is a reflection of the quality of regional governance.

Furthermore, the challenge for the elected regional heads is to ensure the readiness for the implementation of Law No. 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation and its derivative regulations. The simplification of business permits in the regions by the omnibus law should reduce the chances of attempts to commit corruption. The mandate of this regulation is to ensure that the digitization of permits runs smoothly in the regions. Omnibus law as policy instrumentation that supports the strengthening of sustainable regional competitiveness requires the optimal performance of regional heads. This must be completed regardless of the kinship background embedded as a consequence of affiliation in kinship politics.

IV. Conclusion

From a political point of view, the figure becomes the center of attention who is always required to appear optimal and perfect. Likewise with the existence of political actors who are affiliated in kinship politics. Kinship relations which were initially seen as natural relations can experience a shift in meaning when associated with conflicts of interest and strengthening of power in local democracy. Kinship politics is actually a matter of psychological trust in which the leader who is about to leave the service tends to hand over the throne to close relatives who are more trusted than external actors.

The findings in this study present the fact that the elected regional heads in the 2020 Regional Head Elections face concrete challenges to

ensure that their leadership does not present corrupt behavior that weakens regional competitiveness. Efforts to achieve public's welfare in the era of decentralization depend on the performance and achievements of the regional head so that personal background and behavior should not destroy the strengthening of regional competitiveness. If that happens, it is not impossible that the view of regional heads who are in kinship ties will get worse and actually trigger the birth of regulations limiting kinship participation in regional political contestations.

Discussions about kinship politics in Indonesia present a perceptual dichotomy, where on the one hand this is not a problem when the local leadership of kinship politics is able to bring together prosperity. However, on the other hand, this can become a problem when political actors involved in kinship politics abuse power that perpetuates the strengthening of the oligarchy and ignores the original goal of decentralization, which is to bring prosperity and a dignified quality of life.

Apart from the existing dichotomy, the practice of juridical kinship politics is not something that is taboo. So that the debate on two dichotomous opinions will only result in an unnecessary dichotomy which leads to a counterproductive narrative. The celebration of local democracy should be placed on a fundamental platform that is the essence of its implementation, namely producing local leadership that comes from the people as the holder of sovereignty. The output-based perspective can be used to evaluate the achievement of efforts to improve public's welfare, considering that the people are a political entity that has the right to obtain welfare as an output from local democratic mechanisms. Thus, the view of kinship politics does not only rely on the subjective side (familism), but shifts to an objective perspective, namely seeing the benefits of local leadership in achieving the ultimate goal of regional autonomy. Performance becomes the touchstone of assessment regardless of the kinship politics affiliation attached to a regional head.

Furthermore, candidates who are affiliated with kinship politics face a formidable challenge, namely efforts to achieve the ultimate goal of regional autonomy as a mandate for decentralization in the era of regional autonomy. Public's welfare in an area can be achieved through sustainable regional competitiveness enhancement, which is based on four pillars,

namely a sustainable environment, a resilient economy, social inclusion, and good governance. The performance of regional heads should not be distorted by the desire to enrich themselves which leads to corruption. If that happens, then the public's trust in kinship politics will be increasingly eroded and have an impact on the Regional Head Election contestation for political actors who "coincidentally" have competence but are trapped in political kinship ties in the future. The challenges of implementing the omnibus law and recovering the economic impact due to COVID-19 will be the first touchstone to see the quality of the performance of regional heads who are affiliated with kinship politics after being appointed.

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